KING'S

DAVID COPPERFIELD

CHARLES DICKENS

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Preface

David Copperfield is undeniably the most popular novel of Charles Dickens and according to many critics his best. The main reason of the great popularity enjoyed by the novel is its autobiographical element. The novel presents the trials and tribulations of young Dickens in very poignant manner. It is due to the intimacy of experience that the novel was always a favourite with Dickens. "Of all my books," Dickens says, "I like this the best." Besides the central figure of David Copperfield, the novel presents a large number of unforgettable characters, led by the immortal Mr. Micawber, the king of comedy, always "waiting for something to turn up."

This critical study of *David Copperfield* aims at meeting the examination requirements of English Honours and post-graduate students of Indian universities. No claim is made of the originality of the book. The author has tried to present the best available material on Dickens in a simple and lucid language to help the students in understanding Dickens' art and appreciating the novel.

I am grateful to all the Indian and foreign authors whose works have been used in preparing this book. I also thank my publishes for the pains they have taken in bringing out this book.

Suggestions for improvement are invited and will be gratefully accepted.

DR. M.L. GARG

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DAVID COPPERFIELD

A CRITICAL STUDY

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CHARLES DICKENS—LIFE AND WORKS

(A)
BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Charles Dickens was born at Landport, outside Portsmouth, in Hampshire on February 7, 1812. He was the second child and eldest son of John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father, John Dickens, was employed as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office at Portsmouth Dockyard; of his mother little is recorded. John Dickens was not a verey competent man; he aspired particularly to genteel speech and manners, and clearly thought of himself as a rising young man. He lacked 'any sense of money and could never master the art of making both ends meet. He was expensive and jolly by nature'. However, Charles was his favourite among his children. The mother was "as spendthrift and muddleheaded" as the father. In John Forster's words, Charles was "a very little and a very sickly boy" suffering from attacks of violent spasm which disabled him for any active exertion". In 1814, the family moved to London, and in 1816 to Catham. John Dickens was promoted and was now an officer in the government Dockyard. Dickens's mother taught him his alphabets and later on he was sent to a school run by one Mrs. Giles. He read privately the novels which his father gave him namely *Roderick Random, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe* etc. He was a precocious child and gave early evidence of an imaginative mind.

BOYHOOD BITTERNESS

Meanwhile things were not going on well with his father. The family kept growing but the earnings of John Dickens could not keep pace with the expansion of his family. In 1822, John Dickens was transferred to London and at the time of leaving Catham he had to sell his household goods, for he was deep in debt. Charles had been attending school in Catham so he stayed there till Christmas, and then he too joined his parents in London expecting that "he would be sent to a new school, but nothing like that happened; he was simply neglected and left to roam the streets as he wished". He led with his parents a depressing existence in a crowded London suberb which caused undying bitterness to him. Years later he wrote :

> I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in the world. But, in the case of his temper, and the straitness of his means, he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all; and to have

> utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him, in that regard, whatever.

WORK IN A BLACKING FACTORY

The family's fortune went on worsening steadily. Their debts continued to increase and they failed to stop them. In order to help her husband, Mrs. Dickens decided to start a school. She rented a house and placed a brass plate with the words, "Mrs. Dickens' establishment for Young Ladies" on the front door. Dickens wrote later on in *David Copperfield*, "No young lady ever came to the school, nor do I recollect anybody ever proposed to come, or that preparations were ever made to receive anybody". The efforts of Mrs. Dickens to increase the family income did not yield any result and the family was on the verge of starvation. They had to pawn or sell their belongings, including Charles' books, one after another. But the worst was yet to come an experience so bitter and humiliating that it continued to haunt him throughout his life. The crisis was reached in February, 1824, the month of Charles' twelfth birthday. Within two weeks he was sent to work and his father was imprisoned for debt. His parents found a job for him in Warren's Blacking Factory owned by a friendly relative. His wages were six or seven shillings a week, and he worked hard from eight in the morning till eight in the night, with an hour's leave for dinner and half an hour for tea. For six months, in utter despair, Charles, still little more than a child, worked in the dirty, rat-infested old house, washing and sticking labels on blacking bottles. The sensitive boy underwent unbearable mental torture though his parents were quite satisfied. He felt betrayed by his parents from whom he expected love and protection, years later he wrote :

> It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that...no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school.... No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied.

THE ARREST OF HIS FATHER

Charles' misfortunes did not end here. Within two weeks of his taking up job at the blacking factory, his father was arrested for debt and taken to Marshalsea prison. As John Dickens entered the gates of Marshalsea, his last words to his sobbing son were that the sun had set upon him for ever. The poor boy felt that his heart was going to break. The family stayed on in Gower Street and pawned practically everything, till they were left "camping" in a bare house. Soon the other members of the family, except Charles, joined John Dickens in the prison. Charles lodged with one Mrs. Royalance in Camden Town. She was a marvellously "ill-favoured, ill-conditioned old

lady". He was able to visit his parents and family on Sunday but he had to live without any "assistance whatever...from Monday morning until Saturday night. No advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support, from anyone that I can call to mind, so help me God".

Days and months passed on and the poor boy suffered terribly, until one Sunday night he wept bitterly before his father in the Marshalsea prison. Perhaps the father realised the agony of his sensitive son and so arrangements were made for his lodging near the prison. Thereafter Charles "could at least have breakfast and supper with his parents and brothers and sisters in the prison."

THE RELEASE OF HIS FATHER

The genial and cheerful nature of John Dickens endeared him to the other inmates in the jail, who "made him Chairman of the Committee that looked after their domestic affairs." He drew up a petition King William IV praying him for money so that the prisoners may drink to his health on his forthcoming birthday. Other prisoners also signed the petition. After John Dickens had been in prison for three months, his mother, Charles' grandmother, died, leaving her son a legacy of four hundred and fifty pounds. He paid off his debts and secured his release. As a result of his release, the family was reunited.

THE CALLOUSNESS OF HIS MOTHER

The Dickens's now came back to Camden Town. After the release of his father Charles hoped that he would now be freed from his degrading menial job and would be sent to school. But he was disappointed, his parents were in no hurry to take the boy from gainful employment, and he had to continue that humiliating job for some time more. The owner of the blacking factory shifted his factory from the Strand to Chandos Street where Charles and his colleague, Bob Fagin, worked at a window in full view from the street. They worked so quickly and dexterously that people used to stop and look in. Sometimes there would be quite a little crowd there. One day John Dickens happened to pass by that window and saw Charles at work. He took it as a personal insult that his son should do a menial job at which he could be seen by everybody passing that way. John Dickens quarrelled with the proprietor of the factory and asked him to relieve Charles from his service.

Charles returned home happily but his mother did not like her husband's decision. Next day she went to the owner of the blacking factory and re-employed her son. He agreed and Mrs. Dickens resolved to send Charles back to his job. But John Dickens, whose pride had been hurt, had his way and did not send Charles to the blacking factory. Instead he sent him to school. Charles resumed his studies at Wellingdon House Academy, at Hampstead Road. Dickens could never forget his mother's attitude, and he never forgave her.

UNFORGETTABLE PAINFUL EXPERIENCE

Dickens could never forget this shameful Childhood experience, but nor did he want to confront it. For years he literally avoided the locality where that particular factory was situated. Moreover, this period of his childhood remained an absolute secret to everyone, including his wife, except his close friend John Forster, whom Dickens allowed to read the autobiographical fragment, written sometimes in the late 1840s from which the passages have been quoted. "My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life." Though he might keep that time dark secret even from his family it was never far from his mind. Indeed, it figures in some central way in every novel he wrote; and we cannot understand the creative thrust of his life without taking into consideration his developing attitude towards this episode.

AN OFFICE-BOY AND SHORTHAND-WRITER

Dickens left school at the age of fifteen and joined a firm of solicitors as an office-boy, but very soon he realised that this job could not fulfil his ambitions. Therefore, he turned to his father for inspiration, who, after having retired at the age of forty from the Navy Pay Office, had started working as a journalist. After his day's work at the office, Charles started learning shorthand in the evenings and acquired amazing proficiency in it. In eighteen months he left the solicitors office and became a professional shorthand writer. He got a job in a court of law where he acquired much of his knowledge of the intricacies of the law, as well as his contempt for it, and became familiar with legal characters who are found in abundance in his novels.

ACTING AS A HOBBY

But shorthand was not Dickens's only interest. During his spare time he visited the theatres and music-halls of London. As a small child, standing on the kitchen table, he had entertained his father's friends with comic songs, and this represents a side of Dickens the importance of which cannot be over-estimated. He was a born entertainer. Indeed, all the accounts indicate that he was a great actor, and acting in plays now became one of his hobbies.

AS A PARLIAMENTARY REPORTER

Soon, because of his great speed and accuracy in shorthand, Dickens became a Parliamentary reporter for the British Press. He could earn fifteen guineas a week when the Parliament was in session and much more when its sessions continued throughout the night. He was a great success in his new job. There he earned high praise from his colleagues; one of them said that he occupied the very high rank, not merely for accuracy in reporting,

but for marvellous quickness in transcript. From the Press Gallery of the House of Commons he looked down on parliamentary debates over the Reform Bill of 1832. He developed as low an opinon of Parliament as he had earlier formed of courts of law.

LITERARY CAREER

Dickens started his litearay career in 1833 by writing brief sketches of London characters he had come across in his hours of wandering about the city. He signed these sketches "Boz" which was his nickname for his younger brother, derived from the child's mispronunciation of "Moses". He had also been appointed to the regular staff of the *Morning Chronicle*; he reported parliamentary proceedings when the House was in session; and he travelled up and down the country covering elections, great political meetings and other events.

Dickens's first book, *Sketches by Boz*, appeared in 1836. It was enthusiastically received as the work of a new humourist. His next work, which appeared in monthly instalments, was *Pickwick Papers*. This book made Dickens instantaneously famous, mainly on account of the character of Sam Weller. Dickens was at this time only twenty four. While Dickens was writing the first number of the *Pickwick Papers*, he married Miss Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a fellow-worker on *The Morning Chronicle*. After gaining fame and wealth as a writer of the *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens realised that his ambition could be materialised only through literature. *Pickwick Papers* was followed by *Oliver Twist* (1837-38), *Nicholas Nichleby* (1838-39), *Old Curiosity Shop* (1840) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1814). By now Dickens popularity had grown and the demand for his novels was steadily increasing.

At the invitation of Washington Irving, Dickens left for the U.S.A. on January 3, 1841, where he was cordially received. He wrote his impressions of American life in *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlwit* (1843). Dickens next work was the famous *Christmas Carol* (1843), a collection of five Christmas stories. Some time later Dickens, accompanied by Mrs. Dickens and her sister Miss Hogarth, left England for Italy, where they remained till July 1845. On his return from Italy, Dickens was appointed the Chief Editor of the Daily News, but finding the job full of drudgery, he left it in three weeks. He began working on *David Copperfield* in 1846 and became the editor of a newly started weekly magazine *Household Words*. Dickens began *Bleak House* in 1852 which was published in instalments in *Household Words*. With Wilkie Collins he went on a holiday tour of France and Italy. *Hard Times* first appeared in serial form and later in book form in 1854. Between 1854 and 1857 came a period of pause in the stream of production. *Little Dorrit* appeared in 1858. *A Tale of Two Cities* was published in *All the Year Round*. He wrote *Great Expectations* (1860) also for this journal. It is undoubtedly one of the best works of Dickens. *Our*

Mutual Friend (1864) is his last complete long tale.

UNHAPPY CONJUGAL LIFE; LOVE AFFAIR

Dickens did not have a happy conjugal life. He and his wife were not made for each other. In April 1856 Dickens wrote to his friend John Forster, "Poor Catherine and I are not made for each other and there is no help for it". While acting in a play, *The Frozen Deep*, written by his friend Wilkie Collins, Dickens met Ellen Ternan, the daughter of the herione who acted against him. Dickens fell passionately in love with this teen-aged girl. The intimacy grew, leading to scandal and his separation from his wife. After the separation, most of the children remained with Dickens. Ellen Ternan lived with him as mistress till his death in 1870.

PUBLIC READINGS OF HIS WORKS

At the age of forty-six Dickens embarked on what turned out to be his second career; he started reading passages and scenes from his novels to large audience. He acted all the roles in turn and threw himself into them with tremendous zeal. His public readings were very successful and had a hypnotic effect on his audience. Dickens's hectic life and strenous public readings told upon his health. A railway accident broke his nerves, but his brave spirit did not yield to any nervous weakness. Despite his weak nerves, he continued with the public reading of his works.

DEATH

Dickens went on a tour of the British Isles and Paris where he gave public readings of his works. This put a strain on his health. He revisited America in 1864. He began his last novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in 1869, but could not complete it. On June 9, 1870, he had put in a long day of *Edwin Drood*, when he suffered a stroke at dinner, fell to the floor and never recovered consciousness. He died the next afternoon. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

In fifty-eight years Dickens had risen to the top not only of his profession but of the social scale. He had been received by Queen Victoria, his daughter had been presented at court; peers and statesmen were among his intimate friends : all this had achieved not as a result of wealth but in recognition of his genius. Not in Great Britain alone but in America, all over Europe, and in the East, he was a household name. He richly deserved the honour he received.

(B)
MAJOR MOVELS

1. Pickwick Papers (1837)
2. Oliver Twist (1839)
3. Nicholas Nickleby (1839)

4. The Old Curiosity Shop (1840-41)
5. Barnaby Rudge (1840-41)
6. Martin Chuzzlewit (1844)
7. Dombay and Son (1848)
8. David Copperfield (1850)
9. Bleak House (1853)
10. Hard Times (1853)
11. Little Dorrit (1857)
12. A Tale of Two Cities (1859)
13. Great Expectations (1860)
14. Our Mutual Friend (1864)
15. Edwin Drood (Incomplete, and published posthumously)

2
PLOT CONSTRUCTION

INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that Dickens was a bad constructor of plots. As a matter of fact, plot is the weakest part of his novels. Dickens' plots, except of the last two or three novels, *A Tale of Two Cities, Barnaby Rudge, Edwin Drood*, are shapeless and incoherent. His first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, is no novel at all. "It is practically destitute of plan; it is not so much a novel as a miscellany into which Dickens pours all his experience and observation of life". Walter Allen, though a great admirer of Dickens, complains, "So his novels, those of the first half of his career especially, are often like shapeless bags into which all manner of different objects, of varying shapes and sizes have been ruthlessly crammed. They contain something for everybody and the parts you do not like you can more or less ignore. We remember the early novels not as wholes but by episodes."

LACK OF ORGANIC UNITY

Dickens cannot properly handle his plots. His plots lack organic unity. They are not organic wholes of which every character and incident may form an integral part. Lord David Cecil writes, "Dickens cannot construct, for one thing. His books have no organic unity; they are full of detachable episodes, characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot". Walter Allen says, "For considerable part of his career, then, he wrote as an improviser, caring little about unity of plot or probability except loosely to tie up the ends of the action in the last chapter". The crudities and improbabilities of his plots are astonishing. He introduces a number of episodic stories, sometimes merely melodramatic, which are related to the main theme. Thus the artistic unity is weakened. There is much that is superfluous in his novels. In **David Copperfield**, the entire Steerforth-Emily episode is not only melodramatic but, as Baker points out, it contributes very little to the biography of David Copperfield, which is the theme of the novel.

CONVENTIONS OF NOVEL

It is against this barrage of criticism against Dickens plot construction that it is necessary to take note of the conventions of novel which Dickens followed and the circumstances in which Dickens wrote. Lord David Cecil maintains that Dickens' was just a slave of the formal conventions imposed on the novel by Fielding and Richardson. Therefore, he could not write a novel without erecting a whole structure of artificial intrigue, disguised lover, mistaken identity, long-lost heir, and all the rest of the hoary

paraphernalia of romance on which to hang it. In his early novels Dickens used the narrative device of building an effect of sensation and horror of the gothic novels. He derived the chilling, grotesque gothic atmosphere of terror mainly from Walpole, Mrs. Anne Redcliffe, Monk Lewis, Sir Walter Scott and Harison Ainsworth.

LACK OF INTELLECTUAL STRENGTH

Dickens was by birth and instinct a member of that middle class who formed the bulk of his readers. He did not have the intellectual power to discern its faults. Indeed, he was not an intellectual at all. He observed life; he had no power to analyse and co-ordinate his observations. Still less had he the critical ability to discover the laws governing the novel in general and his own talent in particular. Education might have done something to remedy these defects. But Dickens never had much of education. The actual facts of his own experience he realised extraordinarily vividly, like a child he made no generalisation on them. Dickens' lack of intellectual strength adversely affected the organic unity of his plots. To quote Lord David Cecil once again, "Dickens' intellectual weakness meant that he had no sense of form. He could not impose order on the tumult of his inspiration; figures and scenes swam into his mind in a coloured confusion, he just strung them together on any worn thread of clumsy conventional plot he could think of".

PLOT SUBORDINATE TO CHARACTER

Dickens was primarily interested in characters. In his novels, plot is subordinated to character. He did not care much for his plots and he stretched and strained them to accommodate his characters. His novels are full of characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot. We remember his characters but often we cannot place them in the novel to which they belong. As Hugh Walker comments, "One of his faults as an artist is to introduce unnecessary characters, characters who drop in from nowhere, exercise no influence on the story, and sometimes disappear unnoticed." Mr. Micawber, Mrs. Gamp, Flora Finching, Mr. Crumles, Dickens' most brilliant figures, are given hardly anything to do; they are almost irrelevant to the action of the books in which they appear. And these are among his most interesting characters. We remember the story for them; but the story could perfectly well go on without them. The unity and integrity of plot is often sacrified in the interest of character. Not that there is lack of plot. Dickens' books have only too much of plot. But the plot is, as it were, intermittent. Dickens allowed his characters "to talk themselves out to the full", and if in doing this, they disfigured his plot, he felt least bothered. After pages of humorous conversation Dickens remembers there should be a plot and returns to the main story, during which time the readers have already forgotten it and find it difficult to piece together the old threads. "Very often he leaves a great many threads lose till the last chapter; and then finds there is not enough time to tie them up neatly. The main strands are knotted roughly together, the minor wisps are left hanging forlornly."

IMPROBABLE AND UNCONVINCING PLOTS

Dickens' plots do not grow out of plausible human situations. His plots are full of improbable and unconvincing events and situations. His plots are seldom concerned with the plain motives of human life; there is much in them that is absurd and fantastic. The sudden conversion of Mr. Creakle into the benevolent governor of a prison is unconvincing. In his novels there is no chain of cause and effect; pieces of good or evil fortune happen without cause or consequence. He uses ingenuous and unnatural means to cut through difficulties and unite the knots. His closing scenes are often contrived in the tradition of the theatre and are brought to a happy end, however, forced and unnatural that happy end may appear. Something always turns up at the last moment; dangers and difficulties disappear like mist. In *Great Expectations,* Pip is not left a lonely man as the plot demanded, but is united with Estella. In Dickens' novels, things happen when and where the novelist wants them to happen. Excessive use of coincidence makes his plots artificial and unnatural.

SERIALISATION OF NOVELS

Dickens' novels, before they were issued in a single volume, were serialised in magazines, generally in monthly parts. This alone explains many of the structural deficiencies of his work. This also created quite a few artistic problems. It is possible that some readers may not have read the earlier instalments of the novel or may not be in a position to read the following ones. It means that every instalment should be complete in itself, should have its beginning, development, climax, denouement and resolution, and should also fit in the larger pattern of the novel. Action and excitement must be maintained at all costs; so that the fluctuations of public demand tended to dictate the course future action would take. The one test of success was—success, which could only be interpreted by sales. When circulation dropped, something was plainly wrong with the author-public relationship and had to be mended. Thus, when the sales of *Martin Chuzzlewit* fell from 60,000 to 20,000 there was only one thing to do : Martin had to be packed off to America, however, irrelevant to the main action of the novel the proceeding was. The method of serial publication proved fatal to the structure of the novel. This resulted in making the final novel incoherent and formless.

INFLUENCE OF DRAMA

Dickens had a deep interest in theatre. While in London he frequently went to the theatre and learnt acting. In fact, he narrowly missed joining this profession. So it is quite natural that the influence of drama should be perceptible in his writings. The influence of drama led him to include in his novels scenes of excitement and intrigue. In the novels of the early period, Dickens' plots are arranged according to the tradition of stage. They are subject to the kind of manipulation of reality we call melodrama. While

melodrama must have co-incidences, stock heroes, heroines become part of Dickens' plots. Many of Dickens' plots used the time honoured convention of conflict between parent and child over a love affair, the boy-meets-girl complication. The favourite romance theme, easily distorted in melodrama, presents parents and children lost to each other, miraculously restored at the end of the story. Thus Oliver's relatives show up after he successfully fends off all attempts to make him a criminal.

NINETEENTH CENTURY CONVENTION

Richarad Stang in *Theory of the Novel in England*, 1850-1870 sheds extremely useful light on the theories and conventions of novel writing during this period. Quoting a passage from the *British Quarterly Review* (January 1868) Richard Stang tells us that for a writer the plot is conceived of as a necessarily unimportant and artificial frame-work. "The best of value in works of fiction being the amount of truth they contain", the question of a novelist's success or failure in the construction of his plots is immaterial. For most of the writers of the time the word *plot* probably denoted the conventional plot devices of melodrama, what Bagehot called 'imported incident' rather than action, action being the logical working out a certain initial situation and springing from the nature of characters. Trollope, for example, held that plot 'is the most insignificant part of tale'. He thought of plot as 'the contrived arrangement of incident by which interest is excited, that is, some arbitrary series of events not necessarily springing from the nature of his characters'.

Many modern critics also do not regard the mismanagement or even the absense of plot as disabling. In his Introduction to the *Twentieth Century Views on Dickens*, Martin Price says : "Clearly his plots, like his characters, are part of a coherent Dickens' world : a world in which causalty is intensified into a web of coincidence. It is a world of hightened significance, a world of unrelieved and often frightening relevances, a world where crime and disease are not discrete experiences but dimensions of a larger and more oppressive dehumanization. It is a world of doubles and counterparts, of actions, that reticulate into a vast mesh of consequences."

DICKENS'S LATER NOVELS HAVE PLOT-CONSTRUCTION

It is true that the early novels of Dickens are purely episodic. In a novel like *Pickwick Papers* it hardly matters if some scenes are totally dropped or if the sequence of scenes is changed. But from *Dombey and Son* onwards, Dickens was definitely more careful of his plots. He had gradually become aware of his deficiency and had also become sensitive to criticism. He felt offended if anyone pointed out to him the absence of form in his novels. But he took pain to give his later novels some form. *David Copperfield* does manage to give the impression that it has a plot. *Bleak House, Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit* are definitely better constructed than, say, *Nicholas Nickleby*. *Great Expectations* is a fine work of art from any standards.

Writing about *Hard Times*, F.R. Leavis comments, "It has a kind of perfection as a work of art that we don't asssociate with Dickens—a perfection that is one with the sustained and complete seriousness for which among his productions it is unique."

A GOOD STORY TELLER

We may conclude this account of Dickens' plots with the words of Lord Daivd Cecil : Dickens "may not construct his stroy well ; but he tells it admirably; with his first sentence he engages our attention, and holds it to the end". There is plenty of thrill and excitement in his novels to hold the interest of his readers. He creates on the grand scale, covering a huge range of character and incident. Above all he has to the intensest degree possible the essential quality of the artist, creative imagination.

3

ART OF CHARACTERISATION

INTROUDUCTION

Dickens is a prolific creator of characters. He has created a galaxy of unforgettable characters. He is like Shakespeare in the marvellous creative power of his mind, the creation of men and women on paper who are in many ways more real to us than the friends who surround us; characters who are as unusual and eccentric as Squeers, Weller, Pecksniff, and Micawber, yet as universal as human nature. As we read Dickens' novels we are struck by the immense variety of his characters. Every novel of his is a portrait-gallery, full of some of the immortal figures of literature, whom, once we have been acquainted with them, we can never forget. In *Pickwick Papers* there are as many as one hundred characters and in *David Copperfield* ninety-five. We can say, in the words of Dryden, "Here is God's plenty". David Cecil comments, ''of all the crowded Victorian canvases his is the most crowded. His books are like mobs, huge seething chaotic mobs; but mobs in which there is no face like another, no voice but reveals in its lightest accents a unique unmistakable individuality".

LIMITED RANGE; MIDDLE CLASS CHARACTERS

Dickens' range of characterisation is very limited. He is essentially a novelist of low life. The eminently successful characters of Dickens belong to low or middle classes. He was a past-master in depicting characters belonging to low or middle classes. He knew these classes intimately and could portray them with skill and confidence. Dickens was not well conversant with the characters belonging to high society of London. Whenever he tried to portray characters belonging to aristocratic or upper class of society, he made a sorry mess of it. Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* appears to be theatrical and unconvincing. Dickens did not possess the Shakespearean imagination which could successfully depict kings, nobles and lords without being personally acquainted with them. In this connection Hugh Walker's criticism of Dickens' is more or less true :

> 'Society' he did not know at all, and above the rank of the lower middle class his knowledge grew more and more scanty. This limitation is naturally most marked in his early novels but it continued to the end. The assertion that he could not delineate gentleman in the conventional sense of the world is substantially true.

MAJOR CATEGORIES

It would be difficult to claim that such a large number of characters can be divided into a limited number of categories. Still there are three or four broad categories to which most of his characters belong. First, he has created a number of innocent little children like Oliver, Joe, Paul, Tiny Tim, and Little Nell. These children appeal powerfully to the child love in every human heart. Secondly, we have the horrible or the grotesque type like Fagin, Quilp, Uriah Heep and Bill Sikes. Thirdly, there is the grandiloquent or broadly humorous fellow, the fun maker, like Micawber and Sam Weller; and fourthly, there is the tenderly or powerfully drawn *figure like that of* Lady Dedlock of Bleak House and Sydney Carton of **A Tale of Two Cities** who rise to the dignity of true characters.

PHYSICAL DEPICTION OF CHARACTER

Dickens delights in depicting the physical appearance of his characters. He makes his characters alive by giving a very vivid and precise delineation of their external peculiarities. Dickens had a very minute observation and fantastic imagination and he unmistakably caught the apparently trivial and meaningless peculiarity of the face, the gesture, or the dress which gave a character his individuality. This enables the reader to grasp it firmly. For example, take the famous description of the Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist:*

> He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age, with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall every moment—and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had never had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels.

Dickens portrays his characters first by depicting their external peculiarities and then by attaching to them some tag or label. Sometimes these tags are physical: Uriah Heep has virtually no eye brows and no eye lashes; Peggoty's blouse is always getting unbuttoned at the back. Often Dickens indicates the nature of a man by the tag he gives him. Thus Micawber is always waiting for something to turn up.

Dickens method was to let the characters depict themselves, to let them speak. Dickens observes the individual way of speech of his characters with consummate skill. He catches the favourite words or phrases they use and the themes with which they are obsessed. These words and phrases are reiterated again and again till a particular character is imprinted on our mind. Fagin is in the habit of addressing everybody as 'my dear'; Mr. Grimwig goes

on repeating : "I shall keep my head"; Mrs. Micawber keeps on saying at all odd moments, "I will never desert Mr. Micawber." We do not have to see Fagin or Sikes to know it is they who are speaking; we immediately recognise them from their way of speaking.

NO PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

There is no psycho-analysis of character in Dickens' novels, for he was concerned with characters and not with character. He is not good at analysis of characters. He is rarely successful in giving us the inner man. Dickens' method of characterisation is not that of psychological analysis but the method of exhibition. He creates a sharp memorable image of a character with strong impression of richness beneath. He makes us feel the beauty or horror of a character first; analysis takes the second place. The reality of Bumble, Fagin, Sikes, the Dodger, Noah and Charley Bates is unquestionably vivid. Equally vivid are Peggotty, Ham, Agnes, Dora and Micawber. The image created by Sidney Carton is so sharp that no analysis would have helped us to understand him better. We understand Dickens' characters even without psycho-analysis.

CARICATURES

A common criticism of Dickens' characters is that they are caricatures. Caricature is the art that works through exaggeration, exaggeration of select features and idiosyncrasies. And, no doubt, there is much that is exaggerated in Dickens' characters. Somerset Maugham in his book *Novels and Their Authors* points out, "Dickens' general method of creating character was to exaggerate the traits, peculiarities, foibles of his models and to put into the mouth of each one some phrase, or string of phrases, which stamped his quintessence on the reader's mind." It is true that many of Dickens' characters are caricatures of people he had known but who inspired, not affection, but scorn and dislike.

It would, however, be wrong to classify all his characters as caricatures. Baker points out, "Call them extravagances, colossal grotesques, sublimations of eccentricities, call them what you will : it is obvious that something more imaginative, more creative, went to their making than the keen eye and technical dexterity of the caricaturist". The line is often vague between caricature and the far more than caricature. Surely, the fairest test whether this or that is caricature is to ask, what is it a caricature of ? It is a test that usually works, although with Dickens it is far from implying that everything for which there was an original must therefore be caricature.

It would perhaps be better to say that Dickens exaggerates rather than to say that he caricatures. He exaggerates the marked peculiarities and oddities in the dress, appearance, manner or speech of his characters. But Dickens' exaggeration is different from that of a caricaturist. It is simply hightening of reality. His art is differentiated from that of an ordinary

caricaturist by its sincerity of purpose and excellence of art. "A caricaturist proceeds by broad and simple methods, Dicknes is careful of the minutest detail.'' That is why his characters, even when exaggerated, have immense life and vitality. The Artful Dodger presented in his quaint clothes and individual lingo and Mr. Grimwig looking like a parrot are no caricatures but artistic representations of a shabby young thief and one of the actual eccentrics Dickens might have seen. Surely those of us who do not see anything striking and comic in some people's behaviour and appearance are no judges of Dickens' characters. Santayana, in his fine essay on Dickens in *Soliloquies in England*, says :

> When people say Dickens exaggerates, it seems to me they can have no eyes and no ears. They probably have only *notions* of what things and people are; they accept them conventionally at their diplomatic value. Their minds run on in the region of discourse, where there are masks only, and no faces; ideas and no facts; they have little sense for those living grimaces that play from moment to moment on the countenance of the world.

As Walter Allen points out, Dickens looks at people through the eyes of little children, and describes them as children would describe the grown ups. People who impress children always remain in their memory with their personal peculiarities exaggerated. Thus Steerforth appears to the boy David as a god, and Murdstone as the very monster of cruelty, and they are described as such by the novelist. Dickens had the imagination of a child which tends to exaggerate any peculiarity that impresses it. It is for this reason that those who do not understand his art call his characters caricatures of comedy or puppets of melodrama. As a matter of fact, they are the produts of an intense, accurate observation of a childlike imagination.

DICKENS' REALISM IN THE PORTRAYAL OF CHARACTERS

Critics hold divergent views on Dickens' realism in the portrayal of characters. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch writes about Dickens' realism : "If it comes to the mere wonder-work of genius—the creation of men and women, on a page of paper, who are actually more real to us than our daily acquaintances, as companionable in a crowd as even our best selected friends, as individual as the most eccentric we know, yet as universal as humanity itself. I do not see what English writer we can choose to put second to Shakespeare save Charles Dickens." Some scholars, on the other hand, criticise Dickens' characters as being unreal. They think that this unreality arises from the necessities of plot. Dickens could not imagine probable and plausible situations. As many of his characters are placed in improbable situations and circumstances, the result is that both character and situation appear unreal.

The term realism is used in two different senses. The more common sense is depicting things as they are or as they appear. The other sense is the art of making anything that may be imagined look real; it may even make the impossible seem probable. Dickens has most of this second kind of realism. The typical character in the novels of Dickens is represented by Sam Weller, Mr. Mantalini, Pecksniff, Micawber, Quilp, Dick Suiveller, or Joe Gargery. Some of these may have been drawn from actual life without much alteration, but none of them resembles the people that might be met with any day. Several of Dickens' novels are thickly peopled with oddities and eccentrics, grotesque or absurd bings, freaks of nature and freaks of art, but all have a life of their own, though they are not like anything in ordinary experience. Dickens may have seen their originals; he himself may even have seen them exactly as he has drawn them, for the world to him was alive with such captivating absurdities. Dickens was a true artist. He knew that mere factual reporting is not art, and that an artist must order and select and then give his readers the inner essence, the very soul of the object described. He constantly idealises, refines and heightens reality. "The harsh is smoothed; the worst of everything is forgotten; things pleasant come into relief". His imagination works upon reality, and exalts it and makes it pleasant. He omits the unpleasant and the disgusting, and yet still gives us reality. Mrs. Gamp in **Martin Chuzzlewit** is a piece of the most delicate idealism. She is a sick-nurse, in life loathsome and vulgar, but in Dickens' novel a source of endless amusement. In life she is revolting; in Dickens delightful company. Thus by the potent engine of Dickens' are, his characters partake of a certain reality; they become more than real.

REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTERS

An important quality of Dickens' characters is that while they are fully individualised, they are also representative figures. Some of the characters are like the humours characters of Ben Jonson, but through their humours, their traits have been universalised. In this context, Lord David Cecil points out :

> Indeed, his characters are more than individual creations. It is the contributory cause of their gigantic stature that they are symbolic figures. Mr. Picksniff is not only Mr. Picksniff, he is the type of all hypocrites; Mrs. Jellyby is not only Mrs. Jellyby—though that is enough to make her a delight for ever—she is also the type of all professional philanthropists; Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz is not just Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz, he is the type of all legal advocates. Like the writers of all old moralities, Dickens peoples his stage with virtues and vices, and like them he does it gaily, presenting them as no frigid abstractions, but as clowns and zanies thwaking their bladders, exuberant in motley and bell.

ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS

Dickens is not much interested in depicting average youngmen and women. His greatest success lies in painting characters who have some marked peculiarity, oddity or eccentricity in their character. In this context, Gissing comments, "With the normal in character, Dickens does not often concern himself. His greatest success lies with confessed eccentrics." Of all his characters, it is perhaps the eccentric ones that carry the real Dickens stamp. He observed the grotesque abnormalities of their character, and selected, combined and presented them to the great delight of his readers. G.K. Chesterton comments on them :

> The key of the great characters of Dickens is that they are all great fools. There is the same difference between a great fool and a small fool as there is between a great poet and a small poet. The great fool is a being who is above wisdom rather than below it.....A man can be entirely great while he is entirely foolish. We see this in the epic heroes, such as Achilles. Nay, a man can be entirely great because he is entirely foolish. We see this in all the great comic characters of all great comic writers of whom Dickens was the last.

The most successful of such characters is Mr. Micawber, with his beaming face always waiting for something to turn up, and retaining his cheerful optimism even under the most adverse circumstances. The most uncompromising realist is sure to enjoy his company. "No man ever lived who possibly could not have been so consistently delightful. Certainly Dickens' father could not have been so—but in this idealised portraiture we have an essential truth." He is the type of the irrepressible hopeful man, full of kindness, who goes through life an unreluctant pensioner on the friends won by his many good and genial qualities. He is a universal type, such men are peculiar to no nation; they exist in every part of the world. Dickens is at his best when dealing with an amiable weakness, as in the case of Mr. Micawber.

PORTRAYAL OF CHILDHOOD

Dickens' portrayal of childhood is unsurpassable. He does best when he writes from a child's point of view. He has an extraordinary understanding of them. "He is capital at a baby." The merits of his studies of sensitive nervous childhood are universally recognised. The tragedy of sensitive, ill-used children is a tragedy that Dickens could draw with force, tenderness, and imaginative insight. His sympathy for the suffering child and his childlike vision of the world account for this. The first halves of *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* are among the profoundest pictures of childhood in English letters. Compton-Rickett comments, "Dickens did not describe a child—he became a child for the time being. He lived over again

his own childish days. Hence the poignancy and actuality of his pictures". Walter Allen rightly remarks about the delineation of childhood in Dickens' novels, "A boy would remember every brutal syllable in every brutal sentence. He would remember it to his dying day. In nothing is Dickens more palpably true than in the exactness with which he reproduces the intense sensitivity of childhood."

FEEBLE FEMALE CHARACTERS

Whereas Dickens is 'capital at a baby', his female characters are usually considered to be feeble and artificial. Those of the women who have some eccentricity about them manage to be convincing. Women like Miss Betsey Trotwood or Madame Defarge are no doubt powerfully drawn. "Eccentric, indeed, but on a fine basis of sense and character, is the immortal Betsey Trotwood." But ordinary, normal women fail to convince. Women in love have been portrayed with little understanding of sex life. The tragedy of love, the tragedy of fitful passion, of fertile affection, the tragedy of Juliet, of Maggie Tulliver, of Tess is altogether outside his range.

FLAT CHARACTERS

Dickens' characters, with a few exceptions, fail to develop through circumstances. They do not change and grow psychologically under the stress of circumstance. They remain the same from beginning to the end. E.M. Forster describes Dickens' characters as flat. "In their purest forms", says Forster, "they are constructed round a single idea or quality; when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round." Forster's flat characters are those which were called 'humours' in the seventeenth century. They may also be called types. According to Forster, the really flat character can be described in one sentence such as "I will never desert Mr. Micawber." There is Mrs. Micawber—she says she won't desert Mr. Micawber, she does not, and there she is. Some of the advantages possessed by flat charaters are that they are easily recognised when they come in and easily remembered by the reader afterwards. But Forster does not accept such characters as great :

> The case of Dickens is significant. Dickens' people are neatly all flat (Pip and David Copperfield attempt roundness but so diffidently that they seem more like bubbles than solids). Nearly everyone can be summed up in a sentence and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth. Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own. .....Part of the genius of Dickens is that he does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognize the instant they re-enter, and yet achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow.

As Dickens' is not in touch with the inner life of his characters, with the psychological springs of action, he often makes them act out of character. Thus Mr. Micawber exposes all the villainy of Uriah Heep and becomes a successful magistrate in Australia. Steerforth degenerates into a theatrical figure, into a puppet of melodrama. When his characters do change, the change is sudden and unconvincing. 'Robert Liddel also has a point when he says that almost every successful comic character is flat'. For we do not expect a comic character to put on three-dimensionality. When he does this and abandons his stock phrase and says something quite different, we are disappointed. It is in the creation of these unchangeable comic characters in fiction that Dickens has no rival.*

LIMITATIONS

Dickens' art of characterisation suffers from a number of limitations. He could draw characters only from lower middle class or lower classes; characters belonging to the upper classes were beyond his range. He could not draw complex, or aristocratic types. He had no knowledge of aristocracy, and whenever he strays beyond his range, and he does so frequently, he makes a mess of it. He could not draw intellectuals. Similarly Dickens could not draw men and women of deep passionate natures. His tragic figures remain shadowy and unconvincing. Thus Rosa Dartle is not clearly visualised and Miss Havisham nearly spoils an otherwise excellent novel (*Great Expectations*). He could not also draw a gentleman, if by the word we only mean charm of manners and external grace. Many of his poor characters, like Joe Gargery and Mr. Peggotty have that true nobility of character which is the inner meaning of the word 'gentleman'; but when he tried to depict the manner, Dickens totally failed. Once or twice in the later days notably in the case of Sidney Carton—he was successful, but his gentlemen were usually theatrical figures or colourless abstractions. Dickens was equally a failure at painting a thoroughly black-hearted villain. Jones Chuzzlewitt and other villains of his remain thin, shadowy and mechanical figures. Uriah Heep is a caricature. They are unconvincing.

"Dickens", says David Cecil, "often fails over his characters. His serious characters, with a few brilliant exceptions like David Copperfield, are the conventional virtuous and vicious dummies of melodrama.....And, what is more unfortunate, even in his memorable figures he shows sometimes an uncertain grasp of psychological essentials. He realises personality with unparalleled vividness; but he does not understand the organic principles that underlie that personality. So he can never be depended upon, not to make someone act out of character. Mr. Montague Tigg, that harmless good companion, turns without a word of warning into a sinister conspirator : Mr. Micawber, king of congenitally inefficient optimists, is transformed by

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*In *'Great Expectations'*, the portrayal of Mr. Barlay, Wemmick, Wopsle, Pumblechook, Trabb's boy etc. are examples of Dickens' skill in creating and maintaining 'flat' characters.

a wave of Dickens wand into a competent colonial magistrate." James Oliphant put the truth rather too aggressively: "The prime defect of Dickens was the lack of insight into character". Baker also comments, "The distinctions of character which stare him in the face are purely external. The deeper differences between one consciousness and another consciousness are a sealed book to Dickens. He knows there is the deeper difference and the deeper affinity; but he cannot put his finger on the place and show what it really amounts to.....To him, umanity consisted of an infinite number of individuals, all different, and it was this multifariousness that absorbed his whole attention. His c racters do not react upon each other in truth, they do not act at all, they only behave, and show off their unlikeness one to the other".

4
DICKENS' HUMOUR AND PATHOS

INTRODUCTON

Dickens is one of the greatest humourists in English literature. It was as a humourist that Dickens made his name. Humour was the supreme quality of his genius. Nothing in Dickens' novels is more arresting than their humour. Humour is the soul of his work. It is all pervasive. In this respect, he stands next only to Shakespeare. Referring to the supremacy of Dickens as a humourist, Priestley remarks, "Fashions come and fashions go, and now it is the French who are the greatest novelists in the world and now it is the Russians, but the supremacy of Dickens as a humourist remains unchallenged. We have only one name to put beside his, as a creator of humorous characters, and that, of course, is Shakespeare." It is true that Dickens has not created a comic figure as great as Falstaff but Shakespeare, on the other hand, has not the same comic fecundity. While there is only one Falstaff in Shakespeare, Dickens' is the creator of a whole population of comic characters. There are nearly a hundred characters in *Pickwick* alone and nearly all of them are comic. He must have made more people laugh than the sum total of authors in several literatures. It seems impossible to imagine a day when the world will refuse to laugh with Dickens'. The Wellers and the Pecksniffs, the Swivellers and the Micawbers must surely abide for ever, unchanging and immortal—immortals of lesser note, but still the same lineage with Falstaff.

GRADUAL EVOLUTION OF HUMOUR

Dickens' humour underwent a gradual evolution. In the earlier works it is broad and farcical, an expression of the hilarity and irresponsible gaiety of youth. As a writer of true farce, Dickens has never been surpassed. *Pickwick* abounds in farce, now quite distinct from, and now all but blending with, the higher characteristic of humour. It is a farce of the frankest kind. Gissing comments, "Farce in his younger works always results from the exuberance of spirits, later he introduces it deliberately, with conscious art". The wild absurdity of the Muffin company in the beginning of **Nickolas Nickelby** is a force in the boyish mood, but later on, generally speaking, Dickens makes use of farcical extravagance to soften the bitterest truths. He makes us laugh, and then he makes us think.

HUMOUR AS A WEAPON

In his fight to rouse sympathy on behalf of sufferers of all classes, Dickens possessed the weapon of humour. He could make the people laugh:

and if once the crowd has laughed with you, it will not object to cry a little—hay, it will make good resolves and sometimes carry them out. Only because they laughed with him so heartily did people turn to discussing the question his pages suggested. Nineteenth century England was very proud of its 'progress'. It would not have endured patiently violent attack against the institutions it so much admired—but it read *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickelby*, and laughed and cried over them. For the humour of Dickens is not the dry broad humour of comic situation (though Dickens had that form of character too); it is deep-rooted in character; it throws light on human nature and over it all shines the light of true charity, so that he sees even Bumble or Mrs. Gamp or Squeers with that large tolerance that is the spirit of Chaucer and Shakespeare and Cerventes all the supreme humourists.

HUMOUR OF CHARACTER

The humour of Dickens is essentially a humour of character. The main contribution to humour is made by his comic characters. It is the comic figures we remember first, before we remember the books that contain them. He has created a host of comic characters, the chief among them being Sam Weller and his father, Pickwick, Nickleby, Mantalini, Crummles, Dick Swivelar, Mrs. Gamp, Toots, Micawber, Miss Betsey Trotwood, Dora and many others. They are all humorous figures and though their oddities have somewhat been exaggerated by the novelist to make them funny, they cannot be dismissed as mere caricatures. They have real life and vitality in them.

HUMOUR SHEDS LIGHT ON HUMAN NATURE

Dickens' humour is illuminating. It sheds light on human nature; it arouses thought and is suggestive of wisdom. It results not in broad laughter but in thoughtful smile. There is enough of such humour, humour which illuminates some aspect of human nature in every novel of Dickens. They enlarge our knowledge of human nature. Both Tony and Sam Weller are humorous creations knowing whom we know ourselves the better. It is, however, alleged that Dickens' characters merely entertain and have no other relevance, that they are not true manifestations of human nature. Some critics go as far as to suggest that these humorous characters of Dickens are simply 'artistic irresponsibilities'. They fail to appreciate the great truth lying under these diverse manifestations of the spirit of humour. But the fact is that true humour must throw light on human nature. In this context, the comments of G.K. Chesterton are significant :

> It is the whole business of Dickens in the world ; it is the whole business of his particular inspiration and insight to perceive and to express the fact that such people are the spice and interest of life. It is the whole point of Dickens that there it nobody more worth living with than a strong, splendid, entertaining, immortal nuisance. Micawber

> interrupts practical life; but what is practical life that it should venture to interrupt Micawber? Dora confuses the housekeeping; but we are not angry with Dora because she confuses the housekeeping. We are angry with the housekeeping because it confuses Dora. I repeat, and it cannot be too much repeated, that the whole lesson of Dickens is here. It is better to know Micawber than not to know the minor worries that arise out of knowing Micawber. It is better to have a bad debt and a good friend.....All this was what Dickens stood far; that the vary people who are most irritating in small business circumstances are often the people who are most delightful in long stretches of experiences of life. It is just the man who is maddening when he is ordering a cutlet or arranging an appointment who is probably the man in whose company it is worth while to journey steadily towards the grave.

GENIAL HUMOUR

There are essentially two types of humour in Dickens—the genial, sympathtic or positive humour and the satirical or negative humour. His genial humour is most characteristic. It is truly creative and original. Characters like Micawber, Sam Weller, Pickwick and Toots are presented with genial humour. They are fine humorous figures and so long as we are in their company, we feel extremely light-hearted. The humour in these characters is derived from some eccentricity in their behaviour or some idiosyncrasy in their speech. Sometimes they make very funny gestures. Often they look funny. These characters reveal strange abysses of absurdity, fantastic and yet very real to the readers. This absurdity is not funny in the idea but in the expression. It is impossible to analyse it and to speak about it with any critical adequacy.

SATIRICAL HUMOUR

Satirical humour is produced at the cost of officials, lawyers and fashionable people. Dickens despised hypocrisy, vanity, greed and insolence of men and women and he satirised and exposed those characters who embodied these vices. In the character of Mr. Bumble he satirised all selfish dispensers of public charity. Mr. Pecksniff is representative of all hypocrites. A number of contemporary evils .. -ised by Dickens do not exist today, so they have no relevance for us. But we still remember the characters representing these evils because of the touch of humour with which they have been presented. Dickens gains the attention of the readers when he makes them laugh with him. He achieved great success as a satirist mainly because of this quality of humour. He makes his satirical characters very interesting and endows them with a vivid life. Rev Mr. Stiggins, Sergeant Buzfuz, Bumble, Squeers, Creakle, Mr. Murdstone, Uriah Heep, Rv.

Chadband, Pumblechook, and the greatest of them all, Mr. Pecksniff testify to Dickens's genius in satirical portraiture.

VERBAL HUMOUR

Dickens' novels abound with verbal humour. His descriptions of characters are very humorous. This is how Mr. Pumblechook is described : "a large hard breathing middle-aged slow man, with a mouth like a fish, dull staring eyes and sandy hair standing upright on his head". But Dickens introduced something new in comic narration—assignment of tags of speech to his characters. This method he learnt from his apprenticeship on the stage. Dickens made use of this particular device and gave speech tags to many of his characters who enliven his novels. Mr. Grimwig in *Oliver Twist* says, "I'll be content to eat my head, Sir!" Fagin persuades his juvenile delinquents to evil activity with a simpering "My dear,"while in *David Copperfield*, Mrs. Gummidge is a lone, lorn creature, and everything goes contrary with her"; Barkis is always remembered because "Barkis is willing"; Aunt Betsey Trotwood at Dover interrupts almost any conversation by calling to her servant, "Janet, donkeys"! because of her phobia concerning the animals driven past her front door by mischievous or careless boys and her desire to preserve the grass. Dickens' novels are very rich in verbal humour. His pages are interspersed with humorous descriptions. This is how Mrs. Wopsle's great aunt is described in *Great Expectations* : "Mrs. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid two pence per week each, for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it."

DICKENS' HUMOUR IS INIMITABLE

As a humourist Dickens is simply inimitable. His humour is creative and original, "The humour of Dickens," says A.O.J. Cockshut, "was truly creative and original. It is derived largely from idiosyncracies of language, showing forth impossible eccentricity." The comic in Dickens reveals new abysses of absurdity, fantastic and yet hypnotically real to the reader, in characters who fall outside normal canons of judgement. Dickens' great comic creations like Mrs. Gamp *(Martin Chuzzlewit)* and Mr. Micawber *(David Copperfield)* present forms of absurdity not to be found in human nature, and therfore, hardly amenable to moral categories. It is this positive quality that makes the humour of Dickens so difficult to analyse, and so easy to enjoy. A learned critic rightly remarks :

> While we live, and while our children live, Sam Weller and Dick Swiveller, Mr. Pecksniff and Mrs. Gamp, the Micawbers and the Squeers, can never die. They are more real than we are ourselves, and will outlive and outlast us as they have outlived their creator. This is one proof of

genius which no critic, not the most carping or dissatisfied, can gainsay.

DICKENS' PATHOS

Inseparable from the gift of humour is that of pathos. In other words, humour and pathos go side by side in Dickens' novels. Compton Rickett comments in this connection, " 'Humour', said Carlyle, is a sympathy with the seamy side of things''. Whatever may be said of this as a comprehensive definition of that elusive quality, humour, it fastens with unerring insight upon the essentials of Dickens' humour. A sympathy with what is odd, out of the-way, bizarre, lies at the bottom of all his uproarious fun and quick sensibility. His humour and pathos are not to be sharply differentiated; laughter and tears lie closely together in his writings and frequently involve one another's territory. In no other writer of our time do we realise more fully the truth of John Bunyan's quaint comment, 'Some things are of that nature as to make one's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache' "

FAMILIARITY WITH HUMAN SUFFERING

Dickens has naturally great powers of pathos : his imagination is familiar with common sorts of human suffering; and his marvellous conservancy with the details of existence enables him to describe sick-beds and death-beds with an excellence very rarely seen in literature. A nature far more sympathetic than that of most authors has familiarised him with such subjects. Hippolyte Taine comments, "Yet there is no writer who knows better how to touch and melt; he makes us weep, absolutely shed tears. Before reading him we did not know there was so much pity in the heart. The grief of a child, who wishes to be loved by his father, and whom his father does not love; the despairing love and slow death of a poor half-imbecile young man; all these pictures of secret grief leave an ineffaceable impression."

ABUNDANCE OF PATHOS

There is an abundance of true pathos in Dickens's novels. He could easily create pathetic characters and scence strong enough to wring tears from human life. Much of pathos centres round the heart-rending suffering of factory workers and prisoners in the wretched prisons of the day. Scenes connected with prison in *Pickwick Papers* and *Bleak House* are marked with genuine pathos. Pathos, in Dickens' novels, is also created either by the presentation of the unhappy and miserable lot of children and their death. Pip in *Great Expectations*, Oliver in *Oliver Twist*, Paul in *Dombey and Son*, Little Nell in the *Old Curiosity Shop*, and David in *David Copperfield* have to face many pathetic situations. The experiences of David with his cruel step-father Murdstone and later in the Warren's Blacking Factory are very touching. The death of little children move even the hard-hearted ones.

DICKENS' ABILITY TO MOVE READERS

Dickens was able to move quite a large number of his readers with his pathos. While in his day thousands of people cried at the death of Little Nell or Little Paul Dombey, few adults weep at them today. When Forster was reading Dickens' Christmas Stories to a friend, "he cried so much, and so painfully that Forster did not know whether to go on or stop. Lord Macaulay shed tears over Florence Dombey. After the death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, a neighbour of Lord Jeffery found him in tears. Thackeray was almost as much overcome. When he read the number of Dombey containing the death of Paul, he put it in his pocket, went out, and flung it down before Mark Lemon at the Punch office, exclaiming excitedly that there could not be anything against this; he had not an atom of chance: "It's stupendous."

EXCFSS OF PATHOS

Some critics find an excess of pathos in Dicken's work; others find it artificially produced; such critics react against it strongly. Far from responding to the pathetic effects created by Dickens, these critics are repelled by what they call excessive sentimentality and unmanly tears. A reviewer of Dickens' own time expressed his adverse view : "Mr. Dickens' pathos we can only regard as a complete and absolute failure. It is unnatural and unlovely. He attempts to make a stilted phraseology, and weak and sickly sentimentality do duty for genuine emotion. The result is that when he would move us most deeply he is apt to become rather a bore. Hard-hearted as it may sound, we must confess to having found little Paul Dombey and Little Nell and Tiny Tim exceedingly tiresome, and to have been glad to be rid of them on any terms. The subject is too insignificant for the treatment it receives. Even as sentimentalism the art is a failure from being so much overdone.....The pathos is 'stagey'; it lacks simplicity, grace, dignity." Hugh Walker reacts to Dickens' pathos in these words :

> Generalised, the modern verdict is that the pathos of Dickens is overdone and too long drawn out, and that it shows a lack of self-restrain. In short, in his pathos he follows his usual literary practice of exaggeration. His humour rests on exaggeration; and he chose to set up his pathos on the same basis. The question therefore is, did he obtain results artistically as good as he obtained in his scenes of humour ? His contemporaries answered, Yes; men of a later day, with a few exceptions, say, No.

Another reviewer wrote thus : "We do not believe that Dickens's pathos is by any means his strong side. He spoils his best touches by his heavy hand in harping on them. Even in the death of little Paul, a great deal too much is made of a very natural death in itself—the child's languid interest

in the return of the golden ripple to the wall at sunset, and his fancy that he was floating with the river to the sea. Dickens is so obviously delighted with himself for this picturesque piece of sentiment, that he quite fondles his own conception...We more than doubt, then, whether Dickens can be called a great master of pathos .t all. There is no true lyrical, no poetic touch, about his pathos; it is in the main, the overstrained pathos of melodrama."

Lord David Cecil points out that a novelist should take care that the emotion he extracts from his pathetic situation is inevitably inherent in it, and secondly he is not overstating it. If a novelist tries to exploit the emotions of his readers, they are nauseated rather than touched. And the situations will give the impression of being theatrical. Shakespeare could extract sympathy and tears out of his readers because there were 'no exaggerations, no dewelling upon the subject, no beating out thin'. But it is quite different with Dickens. He is accused of wallowing naked in the pathetic. It is also alleged that Dickens' genius had little tragic force. He could describe the horrible, as in the death of Bill Sikes; he could be painfully melodramatic, as in characters like Rose Dartle and Madame Defarge, but he seems to have been unable to command the simplicity of real tragic greatness.

CHARGE OF MAWKISHNESS

It is on account of Dickens' over-emphasis on pathos that he has been charged with mawkishness and even those who greatly enjoy his humour turn away in disgust from the pages meant to draw tears. Such, for example, are the death-scenes of Paul Dombey and little Nell. These, however, cannot be called mawkish, for they are not flagrantly untrue. At least they succeed in their purpose of focussing attention on the sad plight of these children. Moreover, such scenes have symbolic significance. The death of the heroine of *Old Curiosity Shop* is symbolic of the premature close of a sweet, delicate and innocent life. Little Nell typifies the suffering of those hapless children who were then being tortured in English mines and factories.

We may conclude with the following observation. "Of his pathos we cannot candidly speak in such glowing terms as of his humour—not however, because his pathos was good, but because his humour was so matchless. He was humouristic by nature, and because he could not help himself. He was pathetic by art and because pathos is indispensable to the writer of fiction". This means that humour came naturally and spontaneously to Dickens' pen, while to create pathos Dickens had to exert himself.

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5

DICKENS AS A SATIRIST

A GREAT SATIRIST

As a satirist, Dickens occupies an important place among English novelists. He was a relentless critic of the society of his day. Edmund Wilson remarks that Dickens was "of all the great Victorian writers probably the most antagonist to the Victorian age itself." Writing about Dickens' satiric portraiture, Gissing too says, "Not only does Dickens give poetic shape to the better characteristics of English life; he is also England's satirist". Dickens' satire covers a wide range of English life—both private and public. Education, charity, religion, social morality, slums, legal profession, the law's delay, the machinery of politics, debtors' prisons—all come within his range. His satire is aimed at every glaring abuse of the day. He has satirised these institutions and professions by giving satiric portraits of individuals connected with them. He has generally exaggerated their faults in order to focus attention on them. Such satiric portraits are found in almost all his novels. His first novel, *Pickwick Papers,* in spite of being a hilarious comedy, exposed the corruption rampant in the election system. In *Oliver Twist, Nickolas Nickleby, Bleak House, Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit,* he exposed the social institutions with devastating force.

SATIRE ON EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In some of his novels Dickens satired the educational system of his day. In *Oliver Twist,* he exaggerated the portrait of Mr. Squeers and the picture of Dotheboy Hall in order to arouse the sympathy of the readers to the plight of suffering children. The headmaster has no trace of humanity, and the boys remain skin and bones. Dickens did not try to make his picture of the tortured school children and their heartless teachers—realistic. It was enough for him to draw attention to the existence of horror; his immediate business was strory-telling, that is to say entertainment. The master of Dotheboy Hall is not meant for a conscientious study of human being : he is the representative, pure and simple, of a vile institution. He has no humanity; he is represented as thoroughly vile, for the system which he represents is thoroughly incapable of being reformed. Similarly, in *Great Expectations,* the portrayal of Mr. Wopsle's great aunt and the school run by her is a satire on the private schools of the day. In such portraits there is a remarkable blending of satire and jocosity. Dickens may not have any clear conception of the reforms that should be introduced, but his main purpose was to draw the attention of people to these social evils.

SATIRE ON LAW

Dickens saw intense suffering around him: the widespread poverty of people and the festering slums of London sickened him. But he wanted to make his case against causes rather than results. The focus of injustice in England seemed to him to be the very institution which was established to remove injustice—the law itself. The law should actually help and protect the individual. But as legal institutions had developed in England, they had grown into an inextricable mass of red tape and inefficiency. Mr. Bumble, in *Oliver Twist*, rightly describes the law "as a ass; a idiot". In this novel, Dickens has attacked the New Poor Law, especially the abuses in the working of the work-houses of the day. This law was intended as a reform, but Dickens regarded it as a wrong step. The Benthamites argued that there ought to be work for everybody and a man out of work deserved little relief. Therefore, they prescribed such conditions as to make the work-houses as bad as possible. The work-house door was to open to the poor and the needy but nobody wanted to go there. This measure was intended to encourage every able-bodied man to find work and to discourage the man who was lazily willing to let the government support him. But the intended reform of the new poor law, far from accomplishing its purpose, broke the spirit of its victims.

SATIRE ON HYPOCRISY

In his novels Dickens flays hypocrites of all kinds. Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* is a low-born man, who, chancing to have brains, uses them for dishonest purpose. As a matter of fact, he "wallows in perpetual humility; he grovels before his social superiors, that he may prove to them his equality in soul." He is a victim of circumstances and the product of a diseased society. He has been taught since childhood that he must keep his place, and he never forgets this duty. He is constantly assuring others that he is the humblest of mortals. But his soul is full of envy, hatred, and malice. All men are his enemies, and he does not stop short of any crime. Mr. Pumblechook, in *Great Expectations*, is another hyporite, the very embodiment of dishonesty and cringing flattery. He represents dishonesty in friendship; he is a friend and patron of Pip as long as his fortune lasts, but deserts him when his circumstances alter. In his satire on hypocrites from high life, Dickens' was less successful than with the middle class. His hypocrites from high life are not memorable; acristocratic life was beyond his range and he ought to have avoided it. He is equally a failure when he enters the field of hyprocrisy in political life. The circumulation office in *Little Dorrit* is the only possible exception.

SATIRE ON SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Dickens' satire was directed on error wherever he saw it, in human behaviour and social institutions. His later novels, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit*, are an attack upon social institutions which interfere with

human happiness. Dickens launched a powerful assault against social evils on many levels: from the incapacity of the legal system to the artificialities of caste : from the abuses of economic practice to the stupidities of religion, education and politics : from the conditions which permit nauseaus slums to the Victorian attitude which admired pyramiding capitalists and inefficient government. Above all there was his growing sense that nothing could be done to make the world better unless the public used all its opportunities to better conditions for the future.

NOT A PIONEER

A remarkable point about Dickens as a satirist is that he was not the first to launch a systematic attack on the social evils of his day. He was not the first to draw attention to them. He was not a pioneer; in fact, he never claimed to be one. Humphry House, in his book *The Dickens World*, comments :

> Dickens himself never claimed to be a pioneer : the facts he used and the abuses he attacked reached him by the same means as they had often reached his readers. The Preface to *Nicholas Nickleby* makes clear that the cruelties of Yorkshire school-masters were already fairly well known from newspaper reports of actions against them....Imprisonment for debt, which Dickens hammered at for twenty years, had been attacked before he was born; his own father, after being in the Marshalsea, benefited by the Insolvent Debtors' Act of 1813; and the whole question was being loudly canvassed when *Pickwick* came out. He was often even rather behind the times.

LACK OF INTELLECTUAL STRENGTH

Dickens's satire has been criticised by a number of critics on the ground that there is a lack of intellectual strength in his writings. He appears to be rather superficial. The social evils are symptomatic of some hidden malady, something basically wrong with the system. Dickens does not care to investigate this malady or attack this system. It is alleged that Dickens never grew up intellectually. Whenever he touches upon social reform or anywhere begins to think, he falls below the level of second rate.

MORAL CRITICISM

The charge levelled against Dickens is more or less true. It should, however, be remembered that Dickens sought the solution of social problems through a change of spirit in men rather than in any change in the fundamental structure of society. He directs his anger at the human beings that constitute society rather than at society as an institution. His quarrel is with human beings : George Orwell comments : "The truth is that Dickens's criticism of society is almost exclusively moral. Hence the utter lack of any constructive

suggestion anywhere in his work. He attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without very clearly suggesting what he would put in their places. Of course, it is not necessarily the business of a novelist, or a satirist, to make constructive suggestions, but the point is that Dickens's attitude is at bottom not even destructive. There is no clear sign that he wants the existing order to be overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it were overthrown. For in reality his target is not so much society as 'human nature'".

FAILURE OF SATIRE AS A WEAPON

It is a debatable point whether satire can bring about any real change in society. It is wishful thinking to suppose that laws are changed on the protests of the poets and writers. If we come to ask whether any specific piece of legislation or any particular reform was directly due to Dickens's work, the answer must be 'No'. In all practical matters his ideas ran alongside those people more closely connected with practical things; he did not initiate, and in his major campaigns he did not succeed. Humphry House says :

> ....the most impressive thing about 'Reform' between 1832 and 1870 was its sloth. No genuine attempt to meet his objections to the Poor Law was made till the appointment of the Royal Commission of 1905. Private persons were still imprisoned for debts over £20 until 1861, and imprisonment for debt was not formally abolished before 1869. Effective compulsion on local authorities about Public Health only began in 1866 after still another epidemic of cholera, and the Local Government Board was only set up in the year after Dickens's death. The Civil Service was thoroughly reorganised only in 1870, and the foundations of a national system of education were delayed till the same year. In the face of these facts it is clear that the immediate effect of Dickens's work was negligible.

Still the fact remains that Dickens' novels at least created an awareness of the need for some sort of practical reform.

6
LIMITATIONS OF DICKENS AS A NOVELIST

As a novelist Dickens suffers from a number of limitations. Critics have laid numerous charges against him which are typically Victorian in character.

LACK OF ORGANIC UNITY

It is generally agreed that Dickens cannot properly handle his plots. His plots lack organic unity. They are not organic wholes of which every character and incident may form in integral part. His novels are full of detachable episodes and characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot. Dickens' most brilliant figures are given hardly anything to do; they are almost irrelevant to the action of the books in which they appear. More than any other novelist he is the slave of the formal conventions imposed on the novel by Fielding and Richardson. He cannot write a Christmas entertainment without erecting a whole structure of artificial intrigue, disguised lover, mistaken identity, long-lost heir, and all the rest of the hoary paraphernalia of romance, on which to hang it. After pages of humorous conversation Dickens will remember there should be a plot, and will plunge back for a paragraph or two into a jungle of elaborate intrigue. Very often he leaves a great many threads loose till the last chapter; and then finds there is not enough time to tie them up neatly. The main strands are knotted roughly together, the minor wisps are left hanging forlornly.

LACK OF INTELLECTUAL STRENGTH

Dickens was not an intellectual at all. He observed life; he had no power to analyse and co-ordinate his observations. Still less had he the critical ability to discover the laws governing the novel in general and his own talent in particular. He never had much of education. The actual facts of his own experience he realised extraordinarily vividly, like a child he made no generalisation on them. Dickens' lack of intellectual strength adversely affected the organic unity of his plots. Lord David Cecil comments, "Dickens' intellectual weakness meant that he had no sense of form. He could not impose order on the tumult of his own inspiration; figures and scenes swam into his mind in a coloured confusion, he just strung them together on any worn thread of clumsy conventional plot he could think of."

LIMITED RANGE

Dickens' range of characterisation is very limited. He could draw characters only from lower middle class or lower classes; characters belonging

to the upper classes were beyond his range. He could not draw complex or aristocratic types. He had no knowledge of aristocracy, and whenever he strays beyond his range, he makes a sorry mess of it. He could not draw intellectuals. Similarly Dickens could not draw men and women of deep passionate natures. His tragic figures remain shadowy and unconvincing. He could not also draw a gentleman, if by the word we only mean charm of manners and external grace. Many of his poor characters, like Joe Gargeny, have that true nobility of character which is the inner meaning of the word 'gentleman'; but when he tried to depict the manner, Dickens totally failed. Dickens was equally a failure at painting a thoroughly black-guarded villain.

CONVENTIONAL CHARACTERS

Dickens often fails over his characters. His serious characters, with a few brilliant exceptions like David Copperfield, are the conventional virtuous and vicious dummies of melodrama. And, what is more unfortunate, even in his memorable figures he shows sometimes an uncertain grasp of psychological essentials. He realises personality with unparalleled vividness; but he does not understand the organic principles that underlie that personality. So he can never be depended upon, not to make someone act out of character. Mr. Montague Tigg, that harmless good companion, turns without a word of warning into a sinister conspirator. Mr. Micawber, king of congenitally inefficient optimists, is transformed by a wave of Dickens' wand into a competent colonial magistrate.

LACK OF INSIGHT INTO CHARACTER

Dickens betrays a lack of insight into character. James Oliphant comments, "The prime defect of Dickens was the lack of insight into character." Baker also remarks, "The distinctions of character which stare him in the face are purely external. The deeper differences between one consciousness and other consciousness are a sealed book to Dickens. He knows there is the deeper difference and the deeper affinity; but he cannot put his finger on the place and show what it really amounts to....To him, humanity consisted of an infinite number of individuals, all different, and it was this multifariousness that absorbed his whole attention. His characters do not react upon each other in truth, they do not act at all, they only behave, and show off their unlikeness one to the other".

EXCESS OF PATHOS

There is an excess of pathos in Dickens' works. It seems to be artificially produced. A critic of Dickens' own time comments: "Mr. Dickens' pathos we can only regard as a complete and absolute failure. It is unnatural and unlovely." His pathos is 'stagey'; it lacks simplicity, grace, diginity. Hugh Walker remarks : "Generalised, the modern verdict is that the pathos of Dickens is overdone and too long drawn out, and that it shows a lack of self-restrain. In short, in his pathos he follows his usual literary practice of

exaggeration." We more than doubt whether Dickens can be called a great master of pathos at all.

SUPERFICIAL TREATMENT OF LOVE

The Victorians required too much morality and religion for genuine art. This made Dickens treat love, not only as holy or sublime in itself, but as subordinate to marriage; compelled him to display not the progress, ardour, and intoxication of passion, but only the remorse, misery, and despair. Women in love have been portrayed with little understanding of sex life. The tragedy of love, the tragedy of fitful passion, of futile affection, the tragedy of Juliet, of Maggie Tulliver, of Tess is altogether outside Dickens' range.

We may conclude with the words of David Cecil, "Dickens is the most brilliant of all English novelists; but he is also one of the most imperfect."

7

DAVID COPPERFIELD–AN INTRODUCTION

OCCASION OF THE NOVEL

In April 1847, Forster, Dickens' biographer, told him that a mutual acquaintance could recollect having seen him working in a warehouse near the strand,Dickens felt hurt and made absolutely no reply at the time. But a few weeks later, he placed in his friend's hands the fragrants of an autobiography inspired by that painful reference. Referring to the warehouse days, Dickens writes :

The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned anD delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back anymore, cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time in my life.

Dickens kept the bitter memory of this phase of life concealed in his own mind as long as possible. But once he had told this story to Forster, he had an urge to share it with his readers, but he could not bear the thought of putting naked facts to public view. The experience was too painful and personal to be revealed in its full intensity. So he found it advisable to abandon the idea of autobiography and take up a fiction 'which would allow him to provide an adequate correlative for his pain'. The result was *David Copperfield*

PUBLICATION

David Copperfield is Dicken's eighth novel. It was written during 1849-50 in a serial form. Like most of his other novels, it was published in monthly instalments in a magazine, from the 1st May 1849 to the 1st November 1850, with illustrations by Phiz. Soon after, it was published in book form, and at once gained wide popularity. Though the novel has been written in autobiographical form, it has a wide range, and gives a panoramic picture of Victorian life and society. Its canvas is a crowded one, there being about one hundred characters in it.

DICKEN'S FAVOURITE NOVEL

As already pointed out, *David Copperfield* has been written in

autobiographical form of narration. It is evident that Dickens has put more of himself in *David Copperfield* than in any other of his novels. This explains why *David Copperfield* was always a favourite with Dickens. Just after completing the novel in 1850, he had said, "I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this book," and he had talked of 'personal confidences, and private emotions' in it. In his preface to the 1869 edition of *David Copperfield*, Dickens wrote:

> Of all my books, I like this the best. It
> will be easily believed that I am a fond
> parent to every child of my fancy ....,
> But, like many fond parents, I have
> in my heart of hearts a favourite child.
> And his name is *David Copperfield*.

ITS POPULARITY

The intimacy of experience make Dickens' most popular novel and according to many critics his best. *David Copperfield* has stood the test of time, and it has been liked by generation after generation. Its popularity can be judged by the fact that it is prescribed for study in schools and colleges all over the English speaking world. The main purpose of the novel is to entertain, and it is so absorbing that once we take it up, we do not want to leave it.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

David Copperfield earned critical acclaim just after its publication. Some eminent contemporary author's and critics paid rich tribute to Dickens for the excellence of this book. Many critics regarded *David Copperfield* as Dicken's masterpiece. After reading the novel, Thackeray commented, "Bravo Dickens ! It has some of his prettiest touches which make such a great man of him." Mathew Arnold found this novel, a work so sound, a work so rich in merits." Edgar Johnson judged it as "the most enchanting" of Dickens' novels. G.K. Chesterton, writing in 1911, expressed the view that in this book Dickens had created, "creatures who cling to us and tyrannise over us, creatures whom we would not forget if we could, creatures whom we could not forget if we would, creatures who are more actual than the man who made them". Besides portraying interesting creatures, Dickens has also given us an engrossing story.

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AN OUTLINE STORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD

David Copperfield was born at Blunderstone in Suffolk, six months after the death of his father. On the night of his birth, Miss BetseyTrotwood, David's great aunt, was very eagerly waiting for the arrival of the child in this world, expecting her to be a girl-child but when she was informed of the birth of a boy-child, she was disappointed. She was an old eccentric lady who left the house for her home in Dover because her desire that the child should bear her name could not be fulfilled. The boy was brought up under the motherly care of his mother, Clara Copperfield and under the nursing of Peggotty, a devoted plain and plump maid-servant.

David spent his early years happy, but very soon his mother married a cruel and stingy man, named Mr. Murdstone who sent David alongwith Peggotty to her brother's home in Yarmouth. Mr. Peggotty had made a sea-side cottage of an old boat in which he lived with his nephew, Ham, a young and sturdy fellow, and Little Emily, his niece. David developed close intimacy with Emily and Ham which he cherished all along his life.

After a short time, Miss Jane Murdstone, Mr. Murdstone's sister came and joined the family of her brother and virtually became the sole incharge of the house. A choking atmosphere of doubt, suspicion and fear oppressed the family since her arrival and neither Clara, nor David, nor Peggotty could breathe freely in a healthy atmosphere. David felt himself alienated ; he felt himself cruelly treated and looked down upon by his step-father and Miss Murdstone. In spite of every effort of his mother to change David's view of his stepfather, David could not reconcile to Mr. Murdstone. One day he bit on his hand in an embittered mood and as a result, he was sent to Salem House, a hopeless school in London run by a brutal headmaster named Creakle. The days of his happy early childhood were gone ; he was now in the clutches of hardship and tyranny of situations. It was his good luck that here he met two students, Tommy Traddles and James Steerforth. Tommy was lovable and James was handsome and lordly. He got the affection of both, which sustained his courage to face situations.

In the meantime, Clara gave birth to a child who passed away in her infancy. Very soon Clara also died and David was called back home. He found that Peggotty was dismissed, that she had married one Barkis, a stage-coach driver. Now David was left a lonely boy in the house of Mr. Murdstone. Murdstone sent David to work in Murdstone and Grinsby, an export warehouse of wine. David, a young boy of ten, had to work hard and face starvation; he could not bear the burden of overwork and semi-

starvation; he not only detested the job but also loathed his fellow-workers, particularly Mick Walker and Mealy Potatoes. Here he met Mr.Willins Micawber, a pompous never-do-well person in pecuniary difficulties. David lodged with him. On failing to pay his debt, Mr.Micawber was imprisoned and sent to the Debtor's Prison, King's Bench. When he was released, he went with his family to Plymouth once again. Finding himself alone in the world, David ran away from that place. Before leaving Murdstone and Grinsby, he had decided not to go back to Mr. Murdstone. He, therefore, decided to go to his great aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood who lived in Dover. While he was on his way to Dover, he was robbed of all his belongings and when he arrived at Miss Betsey's house, he was physically tired and mentally troubled.

Miss Betsey Trotwood was not pleased to see David because till then she could not have forgotten the injustice done to her when David, a boy, was born in place of a girl. But Dick, a distant relation of Miss Trotwood, impressed upon her to keep David in her house. David was washed thoroughly and allowed to stay with his great aunt. Miss Trotwood was now thinking about the future prospects of the boy and in the meantime, she wrote a letter to Mr.Murdstone, informing him about the arrival of the boy. Mr. Murdstone and Miss Jane Murdstone came to Dover to take back David but she turned down their proposal and on the advice of Mr. Dick, she decided to keep David with her.

Miss Betsey Trotwood made a plan to continue David's education and she immediately sent him to a school in Canterbury, run by a noble headmaster named Dr. Strong. While David studied here, he lived with Mr. Wickfield, the solicitor of Miss Betsey Trotwood. There David met Agnes Wickfield and became fond of her. Agnes was the daughter of Mr. Wickfield. Here he also met Uriah Heep, Mr. Wickfield's clerk. Uriah was a humble but cunning man.

David completed his education at the age of seventeen. Miss Betsey Trotwood suggested to him to travel before settling down and adopting any profession. When David was going to Yarmouth to see his old nurse Peggotty, he met his old school-fellow, James Steerforth who took him to his home where he met Mrs. Steerforth, James Steerforth's mother and Rosa Dartle, a young girl who very passionately loved Steerforth. This girl bore a scar, the reminder of the brutality of Steerforth who had once struck her. From there David and Steerforth went to Yarmouth to see Peggotty and her family. Little Emily saw Steerforth and fell in love with him, though she was already engaged to Ham.

David now decided to study law and got himself articled to Spenlow & Jorkins, a law firm. He met Agnes Wickfield who told him that she feared Streerforth and advised him to keep himself aloof from him. She hinted that Uriah Heep, her father's clerk, was making plans to enter into partnership with her father. And when David met Uriah Heep, he confessed frankly that he wanted to marry Agnes. It was a great blow to David.

David went to Spenlow's house and met Dora Spenlow, the pretty childish daughter of Mr. Spenlow, and instantly fell in love with her. They were soon engaged, but secretly. During this period, David learnt that Emily had eloped with Steerforth, her aunt had lost all her money, and Uriah Heep had become Mr. Wickfield's partner. For the purpose of helping his aunt financially, David tried unsuccessfully to break his contract with Spenlow & Jorkins. He was determined to repay his aunt for her help given to him and therefore he took the job of secretary to Mr. Strong, headmaster of his former school. But finding his salary too meagre to meet his expenses, he decided to study shorthand-writing for a position as a reporter of parliamentary debates.

Mr. Spenlow died suddenly and the partnership of Spenlow & Jorkins was dissolved. At the time of his death, he was penniless. David finished his training as a shorthand writer and became a reporter. He married Dora who was still a childish girl. While these changes were taking place, Mr. Micawber was working as Uriah Heep's confidential secretary, but he was not so outspoken as he had been previously. David was always in touch with him; but Mr. Micawber always behaved with others in a changed way—there was a marked change in his relations with his family and with David, as if he were keeping something within himself. Very soon, Mr.Micawber felt the voice of his conscience and at a meeting attended by Miss Betsey Trotwood, Agnes, David, Uriah Heep and Traddles, he exposed Heep's villainy. Miss Trotwood also announced in that assembly that Uriah Heep was responsible for the loss of her money. Micawber now felt that he had done as his conscience willed. Thereafter he decided to go to Australia hoping that something there would surely turn up. Being deserted by Steerforth, Emily came back to her uncle in shame and sorrow. Mr. Peggotty and Emily also went to Australia. While their ship was putting out to sea, David watched it : he felt as the sunset was a bright future for them as if they were going to a new land full of light and life. When the ship was gone afar, he felt he was enveloped in darkness.

Since their marriage, the health of Dora deteriorated day by day. David took the greatest care of her health, even then she could not recoup and ultimately she died. At the time of her death, Agnes was also present, as she had always been a true and sincere friend of David. Like previous days, she became the only source of David's comfort, he found that she really had sympathy and affection for him. She advised him to go abroad for a while. First, he went to Yarmouth to hand over the last letter of Emily to Ham. There he saw very cruel scene of tragedy. Off the coast of the sea, there was a storm-tossed ship with a broken mast. A survivor was clinging to it to save his life. Seeing this scene, Ham dived into the sea to save the survivor but the tempestuous waves of the sea swallowed the body of both. The rolling waves washed ashore their bodies, the other man was Steerforth.

After a long travel of Europe for three years, David returned home. He again felt the need for the sympathy and friendship of Agnes. While he

was badly feeling the absence of Agnes, Miss Betsey Trotwood suggested to him that Agnes might be married. It was another mighty blow to his grief-stricken heart. He went to Agnes to offer his best wishes and she, seeing him, wept bitterly. He realized that it was not only he that loved her, but she also loved him. David married Agnes and settled down to begin his career as a novelist.

9
PERSONS AND PLACES IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

MAJOR CHARACTERS

DAVID COPPERFIELD

He is the hero of the novel which deals with his life from the time of his birth to his adulthood. Dickens has put much of himself into his portrayal of David. David is a sensitive boy who suffers under the cruel Murdstones. He is first sent to Salem House for education and then to work in Murdstone and Grinsby's . David first marries Dora Spenlow, an empty headed young girl; afterwards, he realises how incompatible they are. After Dora's death, he marries Agnes Wickfield and by the novel's end, he has matured into a successful author.

CLARA COPPERFIELD

David's mother. She is an attractive, tender person, but emotional and impractical. A few years after the death of her husband, she marries Mr. Murdstone who, after some time, begins to ill-treat her. She is a weak-minded and timid woman who soon afterwards dies as a result of ill-treatment by her husband and her husband's sister.

CLARA PEGEOTTY

A maid-servant in the Copperfield household. She is deeply attached to her mistress, Mrs. Clara Copperfield. But she becomes even more attached to the child David. She is a model of loyalty to the family she serves. Throughout the novel, she remains faithful to David Copperfield and serves him in every possible way. She is one of the most admirable characters in the novel. For a long time she remains unmarried but eventually she marries Mr. Barkis, a carrier.

BETESY TROTWOOD

David's great-aunt, though David refers to her as his aunt. She is unhappy that David was born instead of a girl, though later she acts as David's guardian. She had got married but, being unhappy in her married life, she separated from her husband after paying him off. Subsequently, her husband keeps blackmailing her, and extorting money from her. She proves extremely helpful and kind to David in his misfortune. Although seemingly stern, she is essentially a kind-hearted woman. There is also something comic about her behaviour.

EDWARD MURDSTONE

David's stepfather. He is a dark, handsome man who cruelly beats David and slowly drives David's mother to an early death. After the death

of David's mother, he marries another woman for dowry who is also ill-treated by him.

JANE MURDSTONE

Mr. Murdstone's sister, who remains a spinster. She is even more hard-hearted than her brother. She runs the Copperfield household and continuously harasses David.

BARKIS

A cart-driver who plies his cart between Blunderstone and Yarmouth. He is the man who transports David Copperfield to Yarmouth when David has to go to school near London. He is a shy, quiet man who wishes to marry Peggotty and sends through David a message to her, saying : "Barkis is willing". Eventually, Peggotty does marry Barkis. Barkis too is one of the comic figures in the novel. He has a good heart, but he is a great miser.

DANIEL PEGGOTTY

Clara Peggotty's brother. He is a fisherman living in a boat-house on the seashore in Yarmouth. He is a warmhearted man whose house is a refuse for anyone who needs help. He spends many years in his search for his niece Emily who has run away from home with a lover. He is very friendly towards David Copperfield.

HAM

Mr. Peggotty's orphaned nephew. Ham, like his uncle, is a considerate, kindly person. He is in love with Emily and waits patiently for her after she runs away. He ultimately dies in an attempt to save Steerforth, the man who seduced his sweet-heart.

LITTLE EMILY

Mr. Peggotty's orphaned niece. She is David's childhood sweetheart, but becomes engaged to Ham and later runs away with Steerforth. She is a quiet, compassionate, pretty young girl who wants to become a 'lady', a desire that leads to unhappiness.

MRS. GUMMIDGE

She is the widow of a man who used to be Mr. Peggotty's partner in the fishing business. Mr. Peggotty is supporting her, just as he has been supporting Emily and Ham. Mrs. Gummidge is always complaining and grumbling about life, and lamenting her fate as a lonely person. However, afterwards she improves greatly by rising to the occasion when Mr. Peggotty faces a crisis caused by the disappearance of Emily. Eventually, she also accompanies Mr. Peggotty to Australia.

CHARLES MELL

One of the teachers at Salem House Academy. It is Mr. Mell who receives David when David is first sent from Blunderstone to join Salem House. Steerforth quarrels with Mr. Mell and insults him by pointing out that Mr. Mell's mother is a pauper living in an alms-house. Mr. Mell is dismissed from his post by Mr. Creakle as a consequence of Steerforth's exposure of Mr. Mell's poverty.

MR. CREAKLE

The sadistic headmaster of Salem House School. He is a fiery faced man who enjoys flogging the boys with a cane. He is so snobbish that he dismisses Mr. Mell because the latter is a poor man. Later Mr. Creakle becomes a prison magistrate.

JAMES STEERFORTH

A spoiled young man whom David admired. He is the son of an aristocratic widow who has spoilt him. He has a surface polish and the good manners that deceive people who do not know him. He entraps the innocent Emily and elopes with her. His true selfishness is shown when he deserts Emily, leaving her with his servant, Lithiner, He is killed in a storm off Yarmouth along with Ham, who tries to save him.

TOMMY TRADDLES

One of the two friends David Copperfield made at the Salem House Academy, the other being Steerforth. Of all the boys at the Salem House School, Traddles receives the most punishment. He is a good-natured, loyal friend to both David and Mr. Micawber. Traddles is persistent, and this quality helps him rise from his humble background to become a judge.

WILKINS MICAWBER

A constantly impoverished gentleman who boards David during his stay in London. He is one of the greatest comic characters in English fiction. He has a very flexible nature. When harassed by creditors he becomes gloomy, but the moment they depart he regains his cheerful spirits. He is always "waiting for something to turn up". He has a passion for speaking in a grandiloquent manner and writing flowery letters.He finally accompanies Mr. Peggotty to Australia, where he becomes a successful magistrate.

EMMA MICAWBER

Mr. Micawber's long-suffering wife. She resembles Mr. Micawber in nature and disposition. She too has a flexible nature. She too speaks and writes in an inflated style. She stands by her husband through all his hardships, even joining him in debtor's prison. She amuses us by the highly exaggerated opinion she has formed of her husband's talents and potentialities.

RICHARD BABLEY (MR. DICK)

A half-witted man, though Miss Betsey Trotwood regards him as a man of great intelligence. He is engaged in writing a book, "Memorial"; and he is fond of making and flying kites. He is obsessed with King Charles I, and that King's execution. Mr. Dick too is one of the comic characters in the novel.

URIAH HEEP

A repulsive, scheming young man working as a clerk in Mr. Wickfield's office. He always speaks of himself as an "humble" person. And yet this humble person proves to be a villain. He manipulates Mr. Wickfield's accounts and, by means of his cunning, is able to acquire a

great hold upon Mr. Wickfield who has become a nervous wreck on account of his drinking habit. Uriah Heep then manages to become a partner of Mr. Wickfield, and even begins to dream of marrying Mr. Wickfield's daughter, Agnes. However, Mr. Micawber exposes his frauds and forgeries. At the end of the novel, Uriah Heep ends up in jail.

MR. WICKFIELD

A solicitor and the widowed father of Agnes Wickfield. He is a proud man but his excessive drinking allows Uriah Heep to take advantage of him.

MISS AGNES WICKFIELD

The daughter of Mr. Wickfield who lives in Canterbury. She is a very gentle and wise girl. David is greatly attracted by her charm and her amiable disposition at the very outset. She treats David with great affection, and always gives him sound advice in his personal affairs. He also treats her as a sister. However, after Dora's death, David begins to love her in a different way, and eventually he marries her.

DR. STRONG

He is the headmaster at a Canterbury school which David attends after having been adopted by his great-aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood. Dr. Strong presents a sharp contrast as a headmaster to Mr. Creakle. He is a scholarly, trusting gentleman who is married to a girl much younger than himself. Although his wife is accused of infidelity, he maintains his faith in her.

ANNIE STRONG

Dr. Strong's youthful wife. She is a beautiful, affectionate girl whose family exploits her husband. She had been in love with her cousin Jack Maldon but, after getting married to Dr. Strong, had given up all thoughts of that man, and became a faithful and devoted wife, though she was suspected of being still intimate with Jack Maldon.

MRS. MARKLEHAM

Annie Strong's mother. She has been nicknamed the "Old Soldier" by Dr. Strong's pupils. She is a very selfish & talkative woman, and she is very fond of asserting her authority in Dr. Strong's household, having taken up her residence with her daughter and son-in-law. She always takes Jack Maldon's part and unwittingly helps cause the misunderstanding between her daughter and Dr. Strong.

JACK MALDON

A cousin of Annie's. He is an unemployed young man looking for work. He hopes for some help in this direction from Mr. Wickfield. Ultimately he has to go to India where he has been offered a job. After a time, he returns to England because the Indian climate did not suit him. He does not play any particular role in the action of the novel, apart from being suspected by Uriah Heep and some others of being too intimate with Mrs. Annie Strong.

MRS. STEERFORTH

James Steerforth's mother. She is a possessive woman who has spoiled her son by over-indulgence and a smothering affection. She feels unhappy to learn that her son is in love with a poor girl, Emily. She tries to take every possible precaution against her son getting married to Emily. She lapses into a semi-invalid state when she hears of her son's death.

ROSA DARTLE

Mrs. Steerforth's companion. She is a neurotic, quick-tempered young woman. She has a consuming love for James Steerforth, but outwardly she behaves in a somewhat contemptuous manner towards him. She is a very callous kind of woman, and administers a severe rebuke to Emily on the ground that Emily had entrapped Steerforth.

LITTIMER

Steerfoth's personal servant. He is a formal, haughty person who has an air of respectability, yet he aids Steerforth in his seduction of Emily. He is trapped by Miss Mowcher and is sent to Creakle's prison

MISS MOWCHER

A middle-aged dwarf who is a hairdresser for wealthy families. She is upset when she realises that she was duped into helping Steerforth run off with Emily, and is instrumental in the capture of Littimer, who aided Steerforth.

MARTHA ENDELL

Emily's friend. She is a suffering woman who is forced to go to London to hide her shame. Martha redeems herself by saving Emily from a similar life and finds happiness in her own life after she arrives in Australia.

MR. SPENLOW

Dora's father. He is a proctor and senior partner in a law firm in Doctor's commons. He is a pompous, aristocratic lawyer who objects to David's plans to marry his daughter. However, his sudden death clears the way for David.

DORA SPENLOW

David's first wife. She is a beautiful girl with whom David falls madly in love at first sight. She is an impractical, empty-headed girl who cannot cook or manage a household. David is so charmed by her childlike beauty that he overlooks her faults and marries her. Their marriage is a comedy of mismanagement. After less than two years of her marriage, she dies, leaving David free to marry the domestically perfect Agnes.

MINOR CHARACTERS

MR. CHILLIP

The doctor who delivers David. He is an exceedingly mild-mannered, frightened little man who is especially afraid of David's aunt Betsey Trotwood.

MR. EODGERS

A former clergyman of church in Blunderstone.

MRS. BODGERS

Mr. Bodger's wife.

MR. QUINION

A friend and business associate of Mr. Murdstone.

MR. PASSNIDGE

Another friend of Mr. Murdstone.

MR. & MRS. GRAYPER

The Copperfield's neighbours in Blunderstone.

JOE

Mr. Peggotty's brother and Ham's father, drowned in sea.

WILLIAM

Waiter in a Yarmouth inn who cheats David and eats his dinner.

GEORGE

A Yarmouth coachman.

MRS. FIBBITSON

An old woman in the alms-house in which Mr. Mell's mother lives.

MISS CREAKLE

Daughter of Mr. Creakle, headmaster of Salem House.

MRS. CREAKLE

Mr. Creakle's wife.

GEORGE DEMPLE

One of the students at Salem House.

MR. SHARP

Senior master at Salem House.

TUNGAY

The assistant and cruel companion of Mr. Creakle. He has a wooden leg and repeats everything that Creakle says.

MR. OMER

The Yarmouth undertaker and dealer in funeral clothes.

MINNIE OMER

Mr. Omer's daughter and Emily's working companion.

JORAM

Minnie Omer's sweetheart, later her husband, and finally Mr. Omer's business partner.

MICK WALKER AND MEALY POTATOES

David's colleagues in Murdstone and Grinsby.

MASTER WILKINS MICAWBER

Mr. Micawber's son.

LITTLE EMMA MICAWBER

Mr. Micawber's daughter.

ORFLING

Servant to Micawber family.

GREGORY

Foreman of packers at Murdstone and Grinsby.

TIPP

Carman at Murdstone and Grinby.

CAPTAIN HOPKIN

A prisoner in King's Bench Prison.

MR. DOLLOBY

A shopkeeper who buys and sells rags.

CHARLEY

Another shopkeeper who buys and sells rags.

JANET

Betsey Trotwood's housekeeper. She assists Miss Trotwood in chasing donkey riders off the lawn.

ADAMS

Head boy in Dr. Strong's school.

MISS SHEPHERD

A boarder at the Misses Nettingale's establishment. One of David's earlier loves.

MASTER JONES

A boy whom Miss Shepherd prefers.

THE ELDEST MISS LARKINS

A thirty-year old girl with whom David is in love as a boy.

MR. LARKINS

Miss Larkin's father.

CAPTAIN BAILEY

One of Miss Larkin's suitors.

MR. CHESNLE

A hop-grower whom Miss Larkins marries.

WILLIAM

Coachman of the coach in which David goes to London.

JOE

Minnie's son

MR. JORKINS

Mr. Spenlow's seldom-seen partner. He is reputed to be a strict businessman, but he is really a mild-mannered individual whose name is used to frighten new employees.

MRS. CRUPP

David's landlady in Buckingham street in the Adelphi. She is a lazy woman who drinks David's brandy and feuds with Aunt Betsey.

GRAINER

One of Steerforth's friends whom David invites to dinner.

MARKHAM

Another of Steerforth's friends whom David invites to dinner.

YOUNG GAL

David's servant in London.

HANDY YOUNG MAN

David's servant in London.

MR. WATERBROOK

Agent of Mr. Wickfield at whose house Ely-place, Holborn, Agnes stays in London.

TICKET-PORTER

Servant to Mr. Waterbrook.

HENRY SPIKER

Solicitor in Treasury.

MRS. HENRY SPIKER

Spiker's wife.

HAMLET'S AUNT

A lady in black velvet at Mr. Waterbrook's party.

MR. GULPIDGE

A guest at Mr. Waterbrook's party. He had something to do with the law business of the Bank.

MRS. GULPIDGE

Wife of Mr. Gulpidge.

MR. TIFFEY

A clerk in Mr. Spenlow's office.

YAWLER

One of the school mates of Traddles who later helped him.

MISS JULIA MILLS

Dora's bosom friend. She is a romantic person who advises David in his courtship with Dora.

MR. BLACK BOY

Julia Mill's father.

RED WHISKER

A galrant in Dora's birthday party.

MISS KIT

A young creature in pink with the little eyes at the party.

SOPHY CREWLER

Traddle's sweetheart. A patient girl from a large family, she marries Traddles and assists him in his work as a lawyer.

SARAH

Sophy's second sister. They are ten sisters. Sophy is fourth.

REV. HORACE CREWLER

Sophy's father.

MRS. CREWLER

Sophy's mother.

MISS LAVINIA & MISS CLARISSA

Dora's aunts.

MR. PIDGER

He was supposed to be enamoured of Miss Lavinia.

MARY ANNE

Servant to David and Dora.

MRS. KIDGERBUNG

Another servant to David and Dora.

PLACES

BLUNDERSTONE

A town in Suffolk where David was born.

YARMOUTH

A seashore town where Peggotty's brother Mr. Daniel Peggotty lived with his family in a boathouse.

THE WILLING MIND

A public house in Yarmouth where Mr. Peggotty occasionally went.

BLUE BULL OR BLUE BOAR

An inn in London.

SALEM HOUSE

A school, where David was sent for education.

MURDSTONE AND GRINsBY

A firm dealing in wine where David served.

WINDSOR TERRACE

Place in London where Mr. Micawber lived.

KING'S BENCH PRISON

Jail where Mr. Micawber was kept.

CANTERBURY

A town where Dr. Strong's school was situated and where David got his education.

HIGHGATE

Part of London where Steerforth's mother lived.

DOVER

Town where Miss Betsey Trotwood lived.

DEVONSHIRE

Place where Traddle's sweetheart Sophy lived.

PUTNEY

Place where Dora's aunts lived.

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DETAILED CHAPTERWISE SUMMARY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD

CHAPTER 1. I AM BORN

David Copper eld was born at 12 0' clock on a Friday night in March at "The Rookery" Blunderstone, a village in the country of Suffolk. The nurse attending upon his mother at the time of the delivery said that, in view of the day and hour of his birth, he was destined, first, to be unlucky in life, and, secondly to see ghosts and spirits. He was born with a caul* whichwas subsequently advertised for sale in a newspaper at a low price of fifteen guineas. He was a posthumous child. His father had died six months before his birth.

Miss Betsey Trotwood, his father's aunt, was the principal figure of his family.Miss Betsey Trotwood had been married to a handsome young man but the marriage proved to be stormy. It was suspected that her husband had beaten her. Miss Betsey Trotwood paid him off and effected a separation. Ten years later the news of his death had been received from India. After her separation Miss Betsey Trotwood had assumed her maiden name. David's father had been her favourite until she heard of his marriage to a girl, half his age. She called Clara Copperfield, David's mother as 'a wax doll'. David's mother Clara Copperfield was not even twenty when she married Mr. Copperfield. Miss Betsey and David's father never met again.

On that particular Friday afternoon David's mother sat weeping by the fire in the parlour. She was timid and unhappy. She was disturbed to see a strange lady walk up the garden, peer into the window, frown and gesture to her to open the door. The stranger announced her name as Miss Betsey Trotwood. Clara Copperfield led her inside and broke into tears. Miss Trotwood said, "Tut, Tut." She asked Clara to take off her cap. Clara obeyed. As her beautiful hair fell about her face, she imagined that Miss Trotwood touched her hair gently.

On enquiry, Miss Betsey Trotwood learnt that David's father had left his wife an annuity of £105 a year. Mrs. Copperfield was expecting to give birth to a child. Miss Betsey Trotwood was sure that the baby would be a girl. She intended to be her god-mother. She declared that the new baby *girl* would be named Betsey Trotwood Copperfield. "There must be no mistakes in life with *this* Betsey Trotwood," she said, "I must make that *my* care."

Already agitated by the impending birth of this new baby, and by the death of David's father six months before, Mrs. Copperfield was further

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* Caul—A membrane enclosing a foetus. A part of the caul, when covering a new-born baby's head, was once thought to be a charm against drowning.

troubled by the abrupt appearance and manner of Miss Trotwood. She became ill with labour pains, and Ham, the nephew of the maid-servant, Peggotty, was sent for the doctor, Mr. Chillip.

After a few hours the doctor announced the birth of the baby. Miss Betsey Trotwood was disappointed to learn that it was a boy. She took her bonnet by the strings, aimed a blow at Dr. Chillip's head with it, and walked out of the house, and vanished "like a discontented fairy."

Comments. In the opening chapter, David Copperfield, the hero of the novel, narrates the incidents concerning his birth in the first person. Indeed the whole story of the novel is told in the first person. Apart from the hero, we are also introduced to some other important characters in the story—Clara Copperfield, David's mother, Peggotty, the maid servant in Copperfield household, who plays an important role in the story, and Miss Betsey Trotwood. Miss Betsey Trotwood is a self-assertive woman, though she strikes us as somewhat eccentric and comic.

The first chapter is marked with long sentences and frequent digressions which were the typical characteristics of Victorian novelistic style. The second paragraph is a long single sentence containing nine lines. In this chapter, indeed in the entire novel, the author frequently wanders from the main story. These stylistic features were the result of serial publication of novels which was prevalent at Dicken's time.

CHAPTER 2. I OBSERVE

David Copperfield recalls the first objects that he could clearly observe were his mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape and his nurse Peggotty with red cheeks, dark eyes and no shape at all. Apart from this, he also remembers his house with a long passage leading from Peggotty's kitchen to the front door, a dark store-room that opened out of it, a place to be run past at night. There were two parlours, one in which David's mother, Peggotty and David sat in evening, and another, the best, which was used on Sunday only. There was a high backed pew in the church with a window near it, out of which his house could be seen. David recalls playing in the parlour with his mother.

One night David and Peggotty were sitting alone by the fire. He had been reading to his nurse about the crocodiles. Peggotty seemed to consider crocodiles as some sort of vegetable. David asked, "If you marry a person, and the person dies, why then you may marry another person, mayn't you ?" Almost immediately afterwards, the bell rang and they went to the door. There they saw Mrs. Clara Copperfield who was looking unusually pretty. She was accompanied with a gentleman with black hair and whiskers. His name was Mr. Murdstone.

David disliked Mr. Murdstone and his deep voice. Mr. Murdstone patted David's head, but David was jealous when he touched his mother's soft hand. David refused to give him his right hand to wish good night. Soon after this David dozed away. On waking up he heard an argument between

his mother and Peggotty about the man. Both of them were in tears. Peggotty did not approve of Mr. Murdstone's paying attention to David's mother. Clara Copperfield, on the other hand, disliked Peggotty's criticism. All of them cried and went to bed feeling sad and unhappy.

Gradually, David got used to seeing Mr. Murdstone. He, however, did not like him. He felt jealous of him. One autumn morning Mr. Murdstone came on horseback. He offered to take him to Lowestoft. They went to a hotel by the sea. In a room two gentlemen were smoking cigars. They referred to David as 'bewitching Mrs. Copperfield's encumbrance'. Mr. Murdstone warned them saying 'Brooks of Sheffield' was sharp. At this all of them laughed heartily. David Copperfield observed all the day that Mr. Murdstone was graver and sturdier than the two other gentlemen. He was more clever and cold. They appeared to have feelings similar to David's in regard to Mr. Murdstone. Clara Copperfield felt pleased to hear that the two men had referred to her as "bewitching Mrs. Copperfield."

About two months later, Peggotty invited David to spend a fortnight with her at her brother's place at Yarmouth. David was eager to go, but he asked what his mother would say. "She can't live by herself, you know," he insisted. Young as he was, he did not realise that he was being sent away deliberately. His mother had a tearful farewell with him. As David and Peggotty drove off in a cart, David looked back. He saw Mr. Murdstone come up to his mother and apparently scold her for being so emotional.

Comments. Another important character is introduced to us in this chapter. He is Mr. Murdstone whom David Copperfield dislikes. His name itself, compounded of "murder"and "stone", is typical of Dicken'device of creating an artificial name to reflect a person's character.

CHAPTER 3. I HAVE A CHANGE

David was surprised to see the flatness of Yarmouth. However, when he got into the street which smelt of fish, pitch and tar and noticed the sailors walking past, he was pleased.

Ham, Peggotty's nephew who was present at David's birth, was waiting for them at a Yarmouth public-house. Ham was a huge strong fellow. He was six feet tall but had the face of a simpering boy. His curly hair gave him a sheepish look. Ham carried David on his back through the streets till they came to an old black boat, lying high and dry on the ground. It was the house of Mr. Peggotty. An iron funnel struck out of this house to serve the purpose of a chimney. David was charmed to find that an old boat had been converted into a house by Mr. Peggotty, the brother of his nurse. A door was cut in the side of the boat. It had a good roof. There were little windows in it. It was kept neat and clean from the inside. David's room in the back of the barge was the "most desirable bedroom ever seen." Its walls were white-washed. It had a counterpane on the bed. There was a small window too. The house was full of strong smell of fish. Peggotty told him that her brother was a fisherman and dealt in lobsters, crabs and crawfish.

They were welcomed by a gentle woman in a white apron and by a beautiful little girl called Little Emily. After they had enjoyed their dinner, Dan Peggotty, the master of the house returned. He was a good-natured man. They spent a comfortable evening round the fire. David was puzzled about the relationship of Ham and of Emily. He learnt that Mr. Peggotty was a bachelor and the old lady was a widow of his partner Mr. Gummidge. Ham and Little Emily were cousins. Both of them were orphans and were adopted as children by their uncle Mr. Peggotty. Mrs. Gummidge slept in a different room. Ham and Mr. Peggotty slept in hammocks in the main room.

The next morning before breakfast, David and Emily went to play on the beach. Emily told him about her fear of the sea because it had taken so many of her relatives. She also declared that she would like to be a lady so that she might make a gift of all sorts of wonderful things to her uncle. She ran out on a timber jutting from the side of the pier where the water was deepest and David Copperfield was alarmed that she would fall in. She, however, came back safely. They returned from the beach with shells that they had collected, and they exchanged an innocent kiss before going to eat. David felt certain that he was in love.

Mrs. Gummidge was a fretful old lady. She was more sensitive than others. She always declared herself to be a 'love-lorn creature'. She said everything went contrary with her. Mr. Peggotty always made excuses for her behaviour. She said she felt depressed when she thought of "the old'un", i.e. late Mr. Gummidge.

The holiday ended, and David and Peggotty returned home by the same carrier's cart. David was sad at having to leave Yarmouth, but he looked forward to seeing his mother once more. The door was opened by a strange servant, and for a minute David was afraid that something had happened to his mother. Peggotty took David to the kitchen and admitted that she should have told him earlier what had happened- David's mother had remarried. David had a new father. She led him to the best parlour. There he saw his mother sitting by the side of Mr. Murdstone. His stepfather cautioned his mother to control herself. He shook David by the hand. David kissed his mother and crept to his bedroom as soon as possible. His bedroom was very much changed. He found a terrible black-haired dog in the kennel.

Comments. David Copperfield's happy stay at Mr. Peggotty's home is one of the most idyllic experiences of his life. We are struck by the warm affectionate nature of Mr. Peggotty, especially in view of the fact that he has adopted his orphaned nephew and the orphaned daughter of his brother-in-law. Mr. Peggotty sums himself up with his introductory phrase to David: "You'll find us rough, sir, but you'll find us ready." In fact, both Peggotty and her brother are fine examples of humanity. Mrs. Gummidge, on the other hand, is a fretful old woman. She always complains : "I am a 'lone creature' and every thing goes contrary with me."

CHAPTER 4. I FALL INTO DISGRACE

David thought of Emily and cried himself to sleep. In the morning his mother and Peggotty came to his room. David pushed his mother away. He tried to hide his tears. His mother accused Peggotty of prejudicing the boy against her and her new husband. In the meantime Mr. Murdstone entered the room and cautioned his wife about the need for "firmness" in handling David. He sent both women from the room, but not before scolding Peggotty for addressing her mistress by her former name. "She has taken my name, he says, "Will you remember that ?"

When they were alone,Mr. Murdstone looked steadily into David's eyes. He told him that he set right the obstinate horse or dog by beating it until it was submissive. He ordered David to wash his face and to go downstairs.

After dinner, a coach arrived. Miss Murdstone, the sister of David's stepfather, had come to stay with the family. She was as hard and as austere a person as her brother. She had heavy eyebrows. She resembled Mr. Murdstone in face and voice. She may be called a metallic lady. She carried her money in a steel purse placed in a bag which hung from her arm by means of a heavy chain. After she had been welcomed by David's mother, she looked at him. She remarked that she did not like boys. In her opinion David obviously lacked manners. She immediately took the household keys and assumed all authority for running the household affairs. Mr. Murdstone always agreed with her, and always yielded to whatever she proposed. David's mother greatly resented this lady's assuming charge of the house, and had in fact a furious quarrel with her. But Mr. Murdstone snubbed her and took his sister's side, with the result that David's mother had no alternative but to surrender to Miss Murdstone. After this she never expressed an opinion without previously consulting Miss Murdstone. Miss Murdstone and her brother intimidated David's mother until she gradually became an outsider in her own home.

David had been good at learning his lessons when his mother taught him. Now Mr. and Miss Murdstone were always present to see that Clara was firm with David. This bewildered him so much that he made mistake after mistake and forgot his lessons very often. His mistakes roused the anger of Mr. Murdstone. He frequently threw David's book at his head and often boxed his ears. When he was unable to work out the difficult sums, he felt ashamed and went without dinner.

David's misery was relieved by only one circumstance. His father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs. He found comfort from the study of 'Roderick Random', 'Peregrine Pickle', 'The Vicar of Wakefield', 'Robinson Crusoe' etc. While other boys were out at play on summer evenings, David Copperfield lay in bed and read these novels.

One morning when David reported for his lessons, he found Mr. Murdstone holding a cane. He had prepared his lessons well, but all his

knowledge slipped out of his brain at the sight of the cane. Mr. Murdstone set a sum concerning five thousand canes. David's mother burst into tears. Mr. Murdstone caught hold of David and took him to his room. Clara ran after them, but Murdstone prevented her. David appealed to Mr. Murdstone not to beat him but he held his head as in a vice. After Mr. Murdstone had given him the first heavy cut with the cane, David caught the hand with which he held him - in his mouth and bit it through. Mr. Murdstone beat David severely. He went out locking the door of David's room from outside. David was confined to his room for five days. He saw none except Miss Murdstone who took him down for evening prayers. David noticed that his mother kept her face turned away. He also observed that Mr. Murdstone's hand was bound up in a large linen wrapper. On the fifth day Peggotty approached the door of David's room and whispered to him through the keyhole. She informed David that he was to be sent the next day to a school, near London. She said he should never forget her. She promised to look after his mother and to write to him.

In the morning, Miss Murdstone told David that he was being sent to school. She and her brother had come to the conclusion that he was a wicked fellow. That morning David could not even eat his breakfast because his tears fell upon his bread and butter, and trickled into his tea. Soon the carrier appeared at the door. David's box was put in the cart. His mother bade him good-bye and told him that he would be permitted to come home in the holidays. David was taken to the cart by Miss Murdstone. She hoped that he would repent before he came to a bad end.

Comments. This chapter focusses attention on David's unhappiness. Dickens has beautifully underlined David's need of love and kindness when he is suddenly faced with the difficult situation of accepting a stepfather. "God help me, I might have been improved for my whole life, I might have been made another creature perhaps, for life, by a kind word at that season. A word of encouragement and explanation, of pity for my childish ignorance, of welcome home, of reassurance to me that it *was* home might have made me dutiful to him in my heart henceforth, instead of in my hypocritical outside, and might have made me respect instead of hate him." Dickens also indicts those who deal firmly with children. Firmness, says David, was another name for tyranny. The arrival of Miss Murdstone plays havoc in the lives of both David and his mother. They become strangers in their own home as Miss Murdstone assumes charge of the household. Clara Copperfield is not allowed to love her own child and a decision is taken to send David to school on the ground that he is a wicked boy. The way David is beaten and imprisoned arouses our pity for the poor child.

CHAPTER 5. I AM SENT AWAY FROM HOME

After the cart had gone half a mile and David's handkerchief was wet with tears, Peggotty came out of a hedge, climbed into the cart and took him in her arms. She gave him a paper bag full of cakes and a purse

containing three bright shillings. She also gave him a folded paper on which was written in his mother's hand, "For Davy, with my love." Inside the paper there were two half-crowns. Peggotty did not say anything. She embraced David finally, got down the cart and ran off.

Mr. Barkis, the cart driver (who was as slow moving as the horse he drove), consoled David, and during the ride David offered him one of the cakes which Barkis ate "at one gulp exactly like an elephant." Mr. Barkis shyly inquired about Peggotty's cooking and asked if she had any "sweethearts",. When David replied that she did not, the cart driver asked David to inform Peggotty that "Barkis is willin'" —— a message David did not understand. (later, David included this unusual marriage proposal from Barkis in a letter to Peggotty.)

David slept in the cart until they reached Yarmouth,the first stage on his journey to London. Mr. Barkis dropped David at an inn where eating arrangements had been made for him under the name of "Murdstone." He was served dinner, but William, the waiter, told him frightening stories about the food and then proceeded to eat most of the food himself. William, the waiter, told him such a tale of personal difficulties that David gave him one of his bright shillings.

David left for London by the three o'clock coach. He became an object of ridicule as other travellers imagined that he had enjoyed the large meal by himself. So when they stopped for supper, David did not have the courage to eat anything. The trip continued all night, but David was unable to sleep in the crowded coach. After a very uncomfortable journey they reached London at about 8 o'clock in the morning which was "fuller of wonders and wickedness than all the cities of the earth."

There was no one to meet him. David, who was only "between eight and nine"years old, began to worry if he had been deliberately deserted. But some time later, Mr. Mell, a gaunt, shabby and tall young man, came to fetch him. He was one of the Teachers at Salem House, his new school. David told him that he had nothing to eat, so they bought bread and bacon. Mr. Mell took him to an almshouse. There they were welcomed by an old lady who later on turned out to be Mr. Mell's mother. While David enjoyed his breakfast Mr. Mell took out his flute and produced the most gloomy tunes that David Copperfield had ever heard. After that Mr. Mell and David went by coach to Salem House. The school was a dilapidated old structure with "ink splashed about it" and a general odour of decay. It was enclosed by a high brick wall. It looked very dull. A stout bullnecked man with a wooden leg opened the gate. It was holiday time. There were no boys at school. David had been sent to school during holidays as a punishment for biting his step-father Mr. Murdstone. David read the names of the students carved on an old door in the school-yard and speculated on what they would be like.

In the untidy school room David saw a placard on which was written, "Take care of him, be bites". Mr. Mell told him that he had instruction to

bind this placard on his back and wherever he went he had to carry it. It was evident to David that the words on the placard were a reference to his having bitten Mr. Murdstone's hand when be had beaten him. Mr. Mell then tied the placard to his back; and, wherever he went afterwards, he carried it on his person. David experienced indescribable misery because of this placard. It was a standing disgrace to David to go about with that placard warning every beholder to beware of him. The man with the wooden leg proved to be very cruel because he aggravated David's sufferings by shouting out to him repeatedly to show the placard in a conspicuous manner and not to try to hide it in any way. David learnt from Mr. Mell that there were forty-five boys in all studying at this school. He felt miserable at the thought that forty-five boys would constantly watch the placard of his disgrace.

David had to do many tasks everyday in the company of Mr. Mell, but he did them readily because there was no Mr. Murdstone or Miss Murdstone there to bully him. Mr. Mell never said much to him, and even when he spoke to him he was never harsh. David was afraid of what would happen when Mr. Creakle, the headmaster, and other boys returned.

Comments. A new life now begins for David, but not on a happy note, David's naivete at the inn in Yarmouth is the first of many similar experiences which he will face in the world outside of Blunder-stone Rookery. He becomes the butt of jokes both during the journey and at the school. On his journey from Yarmouth he sees children in the streets and wonders "whether their fathers were alive, and whether they were happy at home." David himself is unhappy and he undergoes untold misery as he looks forward to the opening of the school.

CHAPTER 6. I ENLARGE MY CIRCLE OF ACQUAINTANCE

David had led a routine kind of life at Salem House for about a month when he was informed by Mr Mell that Mr. Creakle, the proprietor of the school, would be returning home that evening. Mr. Creakle too had been away from school because of holidays. In the evening, after tea, David was told that Mr. Creakle had arrived and wanted to see him. The man with the wooden leg took him to Mr. Creakle's quarters where Mr. Creakle sat with his wife and his daughter. Mr. Creakle's face was fiery, and his eyes were small, and deep in his head. He had thick veins in his forehead, a little nose, and a large chin. He was bald on the top of his head. Mr. Creakle had no voice, he could only whisper. Whenever he spoke to anybody, the man with the wooden leg repeated Mr. Creakle's words, acting as his interpreter to the boys. Mr. Creakle pinched David's ear, called him the "young gentleman whose teeth are to be filed", and informed David that he had "the happiness of knowing" his stepfather. The interview was frightening indeed. David tremblingly asked Mr. Creakle if he should take the writing off his back. Mr. Creakle burst out of his chair and David ran away in fear.

Mr. Sharp, the first master arrived the next morning. He was a

delicate looking gentleman with a limp. He had a big nose. Tommy Traddles was the first boy to arrive. He felt quite amused to see the placard on David's back. When more boys arrived, Traddles showed them the placard on David's back and spoke about in a jocular tone. Some of the boys certainly ridiculed David but none of them troubled him too much. He did not feel any embarrassment. Anyway, things turned out to be better. David's anticipated fears were belied. David was not regarded as formally received in the school till Steerforth arrived. Steerforth was reputed to be a great scholar. He was very handsome and was senior to David by six years. He termed David's punishment as 'a jolly shame'. For this David always remained grateful to him. Steerforth asked him if he had any money. He offered to take charge of his money and to purchase some food. Steerforth organised a feast out of all the seven shillings that David had with him. At David's request Steerforth presided over the feast.

David was informed by the boys that Mr. Creakle, previously a hop-dealer, was a merciless Tartar in his treatment of his pupils. As his son protested against his harsh treatment, he turned him out of doors. Mr. Creakle had started this school after having gone bankrupt as a hop-dealer and after having spent all the money that his wife had brought as dowry. Tungay, the man with the wooden leg, was said to be a former assistant of Mr. Creakle. He was supposed to know all his secrets. Mr. Creakle, however, never had the courage to beat Steerforth.David also learnt that Miss Creakle was regarded by all boys as being in love with Steerforth. Both Mr. Sharp and Mr. Mell were poorly paid for their work.

At the end of the feast, Steerforth promised to look after David well during his stay at the school. Steerforth then asked him if he had a sister. When David answered in the negative, Steerforth remarked, "I should think she would have been a pretty, timid, little, bright-eyed sort of girl".

Comments. This chapter gives us some idea of Salem House, the institution where David is to study. We also get some information about Mr. Creakle, the proprietor of the school, and about some of the boys studying there. As his name suggests, Steerforth is the leader of the students. The naive David is so impressed by Steerforth's gentle and refined manner that he fails to see that Steerforth is using his money to feed the entire bedroom.

CHAPTER 7. MY FIRST HALF AT SALEM HOUSE

The school opened in the right earnest the next day. Mr. Creakle addressed the boys and warned them against any laxity in learning their lessons. He threatened that he would not hesitate to punish anyone who proved to be negligent in any way. He told David that if David was famous for "biting" people, he was famous for punishing boys. Thereafter Mr. Creakle actually caned many boys including David. "Half the establishment was writhing and crying before the day's work began", Dicken comments.

Whether David sat in the classroom or played on the playground, he

felt a constant fear of Mr. Creakle who always threatened to beat him. Traddles was the merriest and yet the most miserable of all the boys. He was "caned every day that half-year ......" Once he happened to hit a ball which broke a window and then hit Mr. Creakle on the head. This was something for which he could not be forgiven, and so he was punished as on similar other occasions. But he was a very honourable and never betrayed anyone. On one occasion Steerforth laughed in church. Traddles was suspected of this mischief. He was severely punished but he did not disclose the name of the real offender. Steerforth rewarded Traddles by saying that there was nothing of the sneak in him. Mr. Creakle treated David very severely. David had one advantage. Whenever Mr. Creakle wanted to cane him in passing, he found the placard in the way. It was for this reason that the placard was removed from David's back.

On Sundays all the boys had to attend church. Steerforth always went arm-in arm with Miss Creakle. David was very impressed to see Steerforth walking to church in the company of Miss Creakle, followed by all the boys. Miss Creakle seemed to David to be a young lady of extraordinary attractions. David felt a great admiration for Steerforth who continued to protect him and proved a very useful friend to him. Their friendship got cemented. When David mentioned that he had read 'Peregrine Pickle' Steerforth requested David Copperfield to tell him the stories that he had read at night and in the morning. David felt flattered by this arrangement. Though he was often sleepy and weary, he never disappointed Steerforth by refusing to tell a story.

David felt extremely excited and happy to receive a letter from Peggotty after a few weeks of his arrival at Salem House. She had also sent him, with the letter, a cake, some oranges and two bottles of cowslip wine.

David picked up some crumbs of knowledge by means of his own vanity, Steerforth's encouragement and Mr. Mell's assistance, David was sad to observe that Steerforth looked with contempt at Mr. Mell. David regretted having told Steerforth about his visit in Mr. Mell's company to the almshouse.

One day a very unpleasant incident occurred. It was a half-holiday, being Saturday. Mr. Creakle kept house from indisposition. In the afternoon all the boys were ordered into school because the weather was not favourable for going out. They were given some lighter task than usual. There was a great noise in the class. Mr. Mell ordered the boys, particularly Steerforth, to be silent. Steerforth said something offensive to Mr. Mell. Mr. Mell rebuked him for behaving in a base and mean manner. Steerforth, in return, called Mr. Mell an impudent beggar. Mr. Creakle and Tungay appeared on the scene all of a sudden. Mrs and Miss Creakle also appeared on the scene. Creakle demanded an explanation. He rebuked Mr. Mell for calling Steerforth a favourite. The accusation of beggary again came up . Mr. Mell had to admit that his mother lived in an almshouse. Mr. Creakle remarked that he was not running any charity school. He dismissed Mr.

Mell then and there. Mr. Mell patted David on the shoulder. He hoped Steerforth would be ashamed of what he had done. He quietly left the school. Mr. Creakle justified his action in dismissing Mr. Mell because he wanted to maintain the reputation of his school.

Traddles felt so miserable about Mr. Mell's dismissal that he began to cry, whereupon Mr. Creakle caned him. David, however, controlled his tears. Traddles accused Steerforth of having ill-treated Mr. Mell who had lost his job. Steerforth said that he was not so callous as Traddles thought him to be. He promised to write to his mother to give some financial help to Mr. Mell. Both David and Traddles expressed their appreciation of Steerforth's noble intention. As Mr. Mell had now left the school, a new master came to take his place. Before the new teacher joined his duties, he was introduced to Steerforth who expressed a good opinion about the new man.

One afternoon, Tungay came and informed David that there were visitors to see him. He went to the room where the visitors waited for him and was pleasantly surprised to find that Peggotty and Ham had come to see him. They brought of him presents of lobsters, crabs and shrimps. They laughed and talked much. They informed him that Little Emily was growing up to be a pretty and clever woman. David introduced the relatives of his nurse to Steerforth. Mr. Peggotty and Ham were enchanted by Steerforth's charming personality. They started talking to him in an open-hearted manner. After their departure, the boys had a grand supper. Poor Traddles fell ill later on. He was punished for refusing to confess. At last the holidays arrived and David found himself in the Yarmouth Mail bound for his home town.

Comments. In this chapter Dickens launches a seathing attack on the educational system of his age. The wretchedness of the school headed by the cruel Mr. Creakle is Dickens' protest for many schools of this kind. Dickens attended Wellington Academy in North London, and this is probably a disguised account of his schooling. Dickens comments, "Half the establishment was writhing and crying before the day's work began; and how much of it had writhed and cried before the day's work was over I am really afraid to recollect .... " The beatings are David's most vivid recollection of Salem House, along-with the abuse suffered by poor Traddles who was "caned everyday that half year ....." Dickens further comments, "In a carried on by sheer cruelty, whether it is presided over by a dunce or not, there is not likely to be much learnt. I believe our boys were, generally, as ignorant a set as any school boys in existence ; they were too much troubled and knocked about to learn ; they could no more do that to advantage, than any one can do anything to advantage in a life of constant misfortune, torment and worry."

CHAPTER 8. MY HOLIDAYS ESPECIALLY ONE HAPPY AFTERNOON

At Yarmouth, David spent the night at the Dolphin inn. Next morning he was picked up by Mr. Barkis, the carrier, who took him to Blunderstone by cart. On the way David told him that he conveyed his message to Peggotty. Mr. Barkis said that nothing had come of his message and requested David to tell Peggotty that he was still waiting for her answer.

On reaching his home David found no one about. He went in quietly and timidly. He found his mother nursing a baby in the old parlour. She cried out when David spoke. She kissed him and put his brother's tiny hand to his lips. In the meanwhile Peggotty came in running and expressed her great pleasure over his return to the house. David had never thought it possible that they (three) could ever be together undisturbed once more ; he felt as if the old days had come back. Mr. and Miss Murdstone had gone out and were not expected to return before evening. They dined by the fireside. Peggotty was made to sit along with them. David gave his nurse, Mr. Barkis's message. Throwing her apron over her face, she laughed heartily. On his mother's asking her what the matter was, Peggotty replied that Mr. Barkis wanted to marry her but that she had absolutely no intention to marry him or anybody else. His mother asked Peggotty if Peggotty would stay on with her even if she got married. Peggotty replied that she would never leave David's mother under any circumstances. David then told his mother and Peggotty all about his school life. He told them what a hard-hearted man Mr. Creakle was, and what a fine fellow Steerforth was. Then David lovingly nursed the baby for a while. Peggotty wondered what had become of David's great aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood. She hoped she would forgive him as he had then got a brother. Clara rebuked Peggotty for saying such things and expressing her dislike for Miss Murdstone. They were however, reconciled very soon. At about ten in the night David kissed his mother and went upstairs before Mr. and Miss Murdstone returned home.

Next morning David went downstairs for breakfast and apologised to Mr. Murdstone for the way in which he had misbehaved towards him previously and sought his forgiveness. Mr. Murdstone was too glad to know that David was sorry. Miss Murdstone was indifferent towards David. She wanted him to leave as soon as possible. David found that she had begun to maintain a record of the days which were passing in order to keep her informed about how many more days he would remain in the house. David was deeply distressed when Miss Murdstone forbade him to touch his little brother. One day David's mother pointed out the resemblance between David's eyes and the baby's eyes. Miss Murdstone was indignant and called his mother a fool for thinking that there was any resemblance between David and the baby.

David knew that he was not a favourite with Miss Murdstone. In fact he was not a favourite with anyone there. He felt that he made everyone, even his mother, uncomfortable with his presence. This made him miserable. The result of his misery was that he looked dull and clumsy. David resolved

to keep himself as much out of their way as he could ; He spent most of his time sitting in his cheerless room. In the evenings, sometimes, he went and sat with Peggotty in the kitchen. One day Mr. Murdstone remarked that David had a sullen disposition. Mr. Murdstone also warned him against mingling with low and common company, and against associating with the servants. After that David was forced to spend many unhappy hours in the parlour. David was, therefore, happy when the holidays came to an end. Mr. Barkis came to fetch him. David kissed his mother and the baby, when he was in the cart and saw his mother calling to him. David looked out of the cart and his mother standing at the gate. She was holding the baby in her arms for David to see.

Comments. This chapter emphasises the weakness, both physical and moral, of David's mother and the callousness and heartlessness of Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone. David notices his mother's failing health- "her hands ...... so thin and white" - and her changed manner, "anxious and fluttered". Clara Copperfield has now fallen completely under the influence of Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone. The Murdstones' have such control over her that she rebukes Peggotty for speaking against them. David is profoundly torn between his love for his mother and his desire to be near her, and his hatred for the Murdstones. He realises that the growing estrangement between him and his mother cannot be bridged under these circumstances. That is why he is not unhappy when his holidays come to an end and it is time to leave again for school.

CHAPTER 9. I HAVE A MEMORABLE BIRTHDAY

David does not remember much what happened at school till his tenth birthday came round in March. It was a cold foggy morning. After breakfast David was asked by Mr. Sharp to go to the parlour. Happily expecting a basket from Peggotty, David hurried to Mr. Creakle's parlour and found Mr. Creakle enjoying his breakfast and Mrs. Creakle sitting with an open letter in her hand. Mrs. Creakle very gently informed David that his mother Clara had died and that the baby was pinning away. She kept him with her all the day.

"If ever a child were stricken with sincere grief, I was," says David. At the same time, David was sensible of having felt that a dignity attached to him among the rest of the boys, and that he was important in his affliction. This importance was a kind of satisfaction to David, as he walked in the playground that afternoon while the boys were at school.

David left for home by night coach in the afternoon next day. I did not imagine that he was "never to return" to Salem House. On arriving at Yarmouth the following morning, he looked out for Mr. Barkis, but he was nowhere to be seen, he was received by a fat, merry-looking little old man called Mr. Omer. He was a tailor and funeral furnisher. Mr. Omer took David to the back parlour of his shop. There Mr. Omer's pretty daughter Minnie and two other young women were busy at work on a quantity of

black cloth. Mr. Omer took David's measurements for mourning clothes and ordered tea. On inquiry David found that even his baby brother had died. In the meantime Joram, a good-looking youngman, came in to inform them that he had completed making the coffin for David's mother. Joram was evidently in love with Minnie because he stole a kiss from her while she was busy. Mr. Omer, Minnie, Joram and David travelled to Blunderstone in a dark carriage driven by a black horse. All others were quite cheerful, but David felt gloomy and sad.

Peggotty met David at the door and burst into tears. She ushered him into a silent house, where even the Murdstones did not speak to one another. Mr. Murdstone took no notice of David. Miss Murdstone asked him in a whisper if he had been measured for his mourning clothes. In the few days before the funeral, David saw very little of Peggotty. Most of the time Peggotty was in the room where the dead bodies of David's mother and her baby lay. Miss Murdstone sat imperturbably at her desk each day, writing ; Mr. Murdstone alternately sat and paced quietly. A day or two before the funeral, Peggotty took David to his mother's room to see her dead body.

The funeral was attended by several other persons, besides Mr. Murdstone, Miss Murdstone, Peggotty, Mr. Grayper (the neighbour) and Dr. Chillip. They followed the coffin to the churchyard. David began to sob, as the others also did. The funeral ended with the burial of the two dead bodies, and they all returned to the house. Later Peggotty told David that his mother had not been feeling well for a long time. She had been growing weaker and weaker everyday. She had become more timid and weak than before and had gradually faded away. On the day of David's departure for school, his mother had expressed fear that she would never see him again. She had blessed David a thousand times before her death.

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for its pathos and sentimentality. Clara Copperfield finds the strain of leading a servile existence with Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone too much, and dies. The sentimentality of the chapter is comensated for by the realistic psychological portrayal of childhood. As a result of his mother's death, David finds that he is centre of attention by his schoolmates on that last day. He makes the most of it and feels a "kind of satisfaction" which makes him feel very "distinguished".

CHAPTER 10. I BECOME NEGLECTED, AND AM PROVIDED FOR

After the funeral, Miss Murdstone gave Peggotty a month's notice. David felt that Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone would have been happy, if they could have dismissed him too at a month's notice. They did not say anything about his future. Once David mustered courage to ask Miss Murdstone when he was going back to school ; she replied that he was not going at all. David was still giddy with the shock of his mother's death. He was in a stunned state with regard to everything around him. David's presence in the house was almost ignored by the Murdstones, and once

more he was able to visit in the kitchen with Peggotty.

Peggotty could not get a suitable job at Blunderstone, so she decided to go to Yarmouth. David felt delighted when he was allowed by Miss Murdstone to go with Peggotty to Yarmouth for a fortnight. Mr. Barkis, the carrier, came to fetch them. Peggotty cried a great deal on leaving the old home. When she felt a bit cheerful Mr. Barkis asked her if she was pretty comfortable. He moved up close to her. Consequently David was squeezed up between the two lovers until he could hardly bear it. This happened several times on the journey. On the way, Barkis stopped at a Public House and entertained them with broiled mutton and beer. On arriving in Yarmouth, they found Mr. Peggotty and Ham waiting for them, Mr. Peggotty and Ham received them affectionately and, picking up Peggotty's boxes, took them to their boat house. However, before they parted from Barkis, he told David that his message to Peggotty had not proved fruitless, and that something would come out of it. As they walked along Peggotty asked David's opinion regarding her marriage with Mr. Barkis. David approved of the match for in that case she would be able to visit him without any difficulty.

Everything in Mr. Peggotty's house was the same as before. No improvement had taken place in the spirits of Mrs. Gummidge. She was as gloomy as ever. In the meanwhile Emily came back from school. She looked prettier and gayer than ever. David was going to kiss her but she ran away, saying she was no longer a baby. She felt some joy in teasing David. He was almost captivated by her pleasant, shy and sly manner. She was the spoilt darling of the Peggotty household. Mr. Peggotty and Ham made inquiries about the welfare of Steerforth. David praised him to the skies. Emily seemed to take a keen interest in whatever David said in praise of Steerforth.

Mr. Barkis began visiting Mr. Peggotty's house daily evidently to court Peggotty. Every time he came, he brought some sort of gift like oranges, pigs' trotters, a pin-cushion for Peggotty. His manner of wooing Peggotty was somewhat unusual. He seldom said anything. He would simply sit by the fire, and stare all the time at Peggotty who sat opposite to him. One night he took the wax candle which Peggotty kept for her needle work. Later on he produced it from his pocket whenever she needed it.

One day, just before the end of visit, David, Mr. Barkis, Peggotty and Emily set out together for a day's holiday. Mr. Barkis bloomed in a new coat, drab pantaloons and a buff waistcoat. Peggotty was neatly dressed as usual. Mr. Peggotty persuaded Mr. Gummidge to throw an old shoe after the party for luck. She, however, burst into tears and cast a damper on the party's departure. They stopped at a Church. Mr. Barkis and Peggotty went in. Alone with Emily David professed his love for her, and Emily allowed him to kiss her. On their return Peggotty and Barkis informed David and Emily that they were married. They then drove to a little inn, had a comfortable dinner and passed the day happily. Peggotty now shifted from her brother's house to Mr. Barkis' house. Peggotty took David to her new

house which he found to be beautiful. Peggotty promised that she would never falter in her for David and that he would always be welcome at her house.

After spending a fortnight at Yarmouth David returned to Blunderstone where he was totally neglected. Most of his days were spent in reading or day-dreaming, with an occasional visit to Dr. Chillip, the family doctor who had presided at his birth. He was not allowed to visit Peggotty but she came to meet him almost every week. David discovered that Mr. Barkis kept his money in a box and was a miser. Peggotty had to make an elaborate scheme to obtain money from him.

One day Mr. Murdstone told David that educating him served no purpose. He said that in this world one must exert oneself and should not waste one's time in moping and idling away one's time. Everyone had to fight with the world, and David should also do so—and the sooner, the better. Mr. Quinion was called to Blunderstone. He was in charge of business firm run in the name of Murdstone and Grinby. It was in the wine trade. Mr. Quinion was prepared to employ David. In this way he had a chance of earning enough for his food and pocket money. Mr. Murdstone agreed to pay for his lodging and laundry. The next day David set out for London in Mr. Quinion's company.

Comments. David's visit to the Peggotty family further strengthens their relationship. Peggotty ultimately gets married to Mr. Barkis. Her services having been terminated by the Murdstones she had no alternative but to shift to Yarmouth. The description of David's life after his return to the Murdstones is one of Dickens' central themes — the cruel neglect of childhood-which is worse than physical abuse. "What would I have given to have been sent to the hardest school that ever was kept !'' exclaims David.

CHAPTER 11. I BEGIN LIFE ON MY OWN ACCOUNT, AND DON'T LIKE IT

David was surprised that he could have been so easily thrown away at such an age. Thus, at the age of ten years, he became a labouring hand in the service of Murdstone and Grinby. The firm had its warehouse at the river side in Blackfriars. It was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boat. The entire building was overrun with rats and "discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years." This warehouse supplied wines and spirits to certain packet ships. David was engaged in sorting and washing the empty bottles and to help in labelling, corking and packing the full ones. Mick Walker and Mealy Potatoes were his companions in this job.

No words could express the secret agony of David's soul as he found himself with such low companions. He felt that all his hopes of becoming a learned and distinguished man were now shattered. He had no hope of escape from the circumstances in which he found himself. David mingled

his tears with the water in which he was washing the bottle as he felt miserable to think that what he had learned, and thought, and delighted in would pass away from him. David was employed at six or seven shillings a week. On the first afternoon David was called by Mr. Quinion and introduced to Mr. Micawber of Windsor Terrace, City Road. Mr. Micawber was a stoutish middle-aged bald, shabby, but jaunty person. There was no more hair upon his head (which was a large one and very shining) than there is upon an egg. His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of stick, with a large pair of rusty tassels to it ; and a quizzing-glass lung outside his coat. He used to take orders on commission for Messrs Murdstone and Grinby. Mr. Micawber informed David that he was to lodge at his house and that he would call for him that evening.

At eight o' clock, Mr. Micawber returned to take David to his lodging where he was introduced to Mrs. Micawber and her children, Mrs. Micawber was a thin and faded lady. There were four children, the two youngest being twins. One of the twins was always taking refreshment at her breast. Clickett, an orphan from St. Luke's workhouse was the family servant. David's room was at the top of the house at the back. David learnt from Mrs. Micawber the family had been forced to take a lodger because of Mr. Micawber's debts. Mr. Micawber's financial difficulties were almost overwhelming just then. She had, however, lived a different type of life when her parents were alive.

The front door of the house bore a brass plate bearing, the inscription, "Mrs. Micawber's Boarding Establishment For Young Ladies". No Young ladies ever appeared to seek boarding facilities. The only visitors were creditors who came at all odd hours demanding their money. At these times Mr. Micawber was struck with grief and mortification. He even went to the extent of making motions at himself with a razor. But within half an hour afterwards, he would polish up his shoes with extraordinary pains, and go out, humming a tune with a greater air of gentility than ever. Mrs. Micawber was quite as elastic. David had seen her to be thrown into fainting fits by the king's taxes at three o' clock, and to eat lamb chops breaded, and drink warm ale at four. Mr. Micawber always spoke in a carefree manner taking pleasure in using words which were likely to impress the listener. He would often say that he was "waiting for something to turn up" and bring about a change in his condition.

David Copperfield provided himself with bread and milk for his breakfast and bread and a little cheese for supper. Sometimes he spent some money on pastry and sometimes he had to go without dinner. For dinner he had a plate of beef or a plate of bread and cheese and a glass of beer from a miserable old public house called 'The Lion'.

David held some station at Murdstone and Grinby's. But no one knew how much he suffered in his heart. He was unhappy but he never revealed his misery even to Peggotty. Mr. Micawber's troubles added to his distress.

In his forlorn state, he had become quite attached to the family. David offered to help the family with the loan of his wages, but instead Mrs. Micawber asked him to pawn household goods for them so that the family could buy food. This made David known at the pawn broker's shop. At last, Mr. Micawber's financial difficulties came to crisis. He was arrested for debt and sent to the King's Bench Prison in the Borough. As Mr. Micawber went out of the house, he told David that the God of day had now gone down upon him. It seemed to David that his heart was broken. But afterwards he heard that he was in high spirits. When David paid Mr. Micawber a visit, he asked him to take warning and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year for his income, and spent nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and six pence, he would be happy, but if he spent twenty pounds one shilling, he would be miserable. And then he borrowed a shilling from David. David enjoyed his dinner with Mr. Micawber. He was sent by the latter to Captain Hopkins in the room over head to borrow a knife and fork for the purpose.

The Micawber had to sell most of the household furniture. Therefore, Mrs Micawber also decided to move into the prison and join her husband. David observes that here "they live more comfortably .... than they had lived for a long while ...." David rented a small room near the prison and continued his solitary existence. He often visited the Micawber in the prison in the evening.

Mr. Micawber drafted a petition to the House of Commons, praying for a change in the law of imprisonment for debt. It was in the presence of David Copperfield that the petition was signed by the imprisonment debtors in the room of Mr. Micawber. Captain Hawkins was there. Mr. Micawber very pompously read out the petition to the debtors before they signed it.

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for autobiographical portrayal, Dickens' own childhood experience forms the background of this chapter, and Mr. Micawber is a brilliant caricature of Dickens' father. David is surprised that he, a child of excellent abilities, could have been thrown away at such a tender age. He is haunted by the dirt and rottenness of the place he had to work. David suffers secretly. "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship ..... and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom ..... I mingled my tears with the water in which I was washing the bottles". The degradation that David experiencs at Murdstone and Grinby's is an exact account of Dickens' own feelings about his early life. Like Mr. Micawber, Dickens' father along with the rest of his family, was sent to debtors' prison when the author was only nine. Dickens became an apprentice in a blacking factory, pasting labels on bottles. His parents showed little concern for his situation, especially his education. Although the Micawbers have been treated humorously in the novel, (Mr. Micawber is regarded as one of the greatest comic characters in English literature) Dickens never forgave his own parents and always thought that his upbringing

was no better than an orphan's.

CHAPTER 12 . LIKING LIFE ON MY OWN ACCOUNT NO BETTER, I FORM A GREAT RESOLUTION

In due course of time, Mr. Micawber's petition was ripe for hearing. To David's great joy, Mr. Micawber was ordered to be released under the Act. Mrs. Micawber told David that, at the advice of her relatives, it had been decided that Mr. Micawber, a man of great talent, should try luck in the country. The Micawbers, therefore, were going to leave London and to shift to Plymouth where Mr. Micawber might be able to earn some money by working at the Custom House. Mrs. Micawber had a high opinion of the abilities of her husband. She also declared that she would never desert Mr. Micawber no matter how difficult things became. Soon the Micawbers got ready to leave for Plymouth. David passed his evenings with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber during the remaining term of their residence under the same roof. As time went on, they became fonder of one another. While parting from David, Mr. Micawber gave him some very sound practical advice. Mr. Micawber advised David never to procrastinate in any matter and never to spend more than his income. Mrs. Micawber kissed him and hugged him lovingly as his own mother might have done. As the carriage carrying them drove away, David and the maid-servant stood looking at them in the middle of the road.

David had been so intimate with the Micawbers in their distress that he found himself utterly friendless without them. Realising that after the departure of the Micawbers his life in London would be unendurable, David decided to end his "weary days at Murdstone and Grinby's", and run away to Miss Betsey Trotwood, his only relative and a person who he thought might be sympathetic to his plight.

He wrote to his nurse Peggotty to know where his great aunt lived. He also requested Peggotty to lend him half a guinea as he particularly needed it. He soon received the money from Peggotty and was informed by her that his aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood lived somewhere near Dover. David had received one week's wages in advance. So he decided that, in all honesty, he should work till Saturday night. While others were waiting to be paid for, David slipped away. David Copperfield asked a long-legged gentleman with a donkey-cart to fetch his box and take it to the Dover Coach Office. On the way he took out a card to put on the box and held the half-guinea in his mouth. The long-legged man chucked him under the chin, took his money and his box and ran away in the cart, threatening he was going to the police. David ran after him crying and panting but in vain. The cheat had not only taken away David's money but also his box.

Comments. In this chapter the characters of Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Micawber are further developed. The Micawbers now move to Plymouth, hoping for an improvement in their situation. Another important development in this chapter is David's resolution to quit his job at Murdstone and G

rinby's, and to seek the help of Miss Betsey Trotwood, his great-aunt. This decision proves to be a turning point in David's career. David's escape from drudgery leads him into deeper trouble as he sets out for Miss Betsey Trotwood's.

CHAPTER 13. THE SEQUEL OF MY RESOLUTION

On the first day David came to stop in Kent Road and sat down weary on a doorstep. It was ten o' clock at night. David had only three pence in his pocket. He was, however, determined not to turn back. He sold his waistcoat for nine pence to one Mr. Dolloby, a shopkeeper. He decided to sleep that night on a haystack behind the wall of his old school. The warm beams of the sun and the ringing of the getting-up bell at Salem House awoke him.

The second day was Sunday. On that day he walked twenty *three* miles along the road to Dover. He reached Rochester in the evening and ate the bread he had bought for supper. He toiled on to Chatham and slept upon a battery covered with grass.

David felt very stiff and sore in the morning. He felt that he would not be able to walk much that day. Having very little money, and being very hungry, David went into a shop and offered to sell his jacket. There he was caught by a dreadful old man who muttered threats. He caught hold of his jacket and offered to make an exchange. David Copperfield insisted on having money. The shopkeeper agreed to pay him eighteen pence for it. David waited outside till the dreadful old man started paying him in half-pennies. Ultimately David got only sixteen pence after waiting for two hours. David purchased refreshment for three pence, and feeling very tired limped for seven miles along the road. His bed that night was another hay-stack.

On the fourth day David Copperfield started walking between orchards studded with apples. At a few places he found hop-pickers already engaged in their work. He was afraid of trampers. He had a dreadful experience with a man who tried to get his money from him. He slept under the ropes that night. David went through Canterbury on the fifth day. He reached Dover on the sixth day. After making some inquiries he came to know from a carriage driver that his aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood lived on the heights facing the sea.

David Copperfield entered a little shop to make further inquiries. It so happened that Janet the maid servant of his aunt was present there. She asked David to follow her to his aunt's cottage. David soon reached a neat little cottage with cheerful bow windows and a small garden in front, full of flowers. The servant left David standing at the gate. By this time David Copperfield was in a woeful condition. His shoes were torn out. His clothes were just like rags and were covered with stains. His hair was unkempt. Looking up, he saw in a window upstairs a pleasant looking florid gentleman with a grey head. He winked and nodded at David.

Miss Betsey wearing a gardening pocket over her frock and carrying a great knife, came and commanded David to go away. David told her who he was and what misfortunes he had suffered. He burst into tears. At first Miss Betsey Trotwood looked at him in amazement. Then she took him into the parlour. She took out several bottles at random and poured some of the contents of each into his mouth. Then she asked her maid-servant Janet to go upstairs and fetch Mr. Dick. The florid gentleman whom he had earlier seen at the window appeared. Miss Betsey Trotwood asked him what she should do with David. Mr. Dick looked at him vacantly. After some time, as if under some sudden inspiration, he observed, "I should wash him". Miss Trotwood ord ed Janet to get the bath ready. She however, called her back to chase off the donkeys which were being ridden on the little green lawn in front of her cottage. The one great outrage of Miss Betsey Trotwood's life, demanding to be constantly avenged, was the passage of a donkey over that immaculate spot.

After David had bathed and enjoyed some broth, she dressed him in a shirt and pair of trousers belonging to Mr. Dick. She tied him up in two or three shawls. After dinner, his aunt collected from him further facts about his life-story.

Miss Betsey Trotwood expressed her disapproval of Clara Copperfield's having got married for the second time. She also disapproved of the name "Peggotty " which suggested a pagan. David told his aunt that Peggotty was the best, the truest, the most faithful, the most devoted, and the most self denying friend and servant in the whole world. Miss Betsey remarked that he was justified in praising the maid-servant if she was really devoted to him. At night, he was taken to a pleasant room and put to bed.

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for the use of picaresque elements. This type of novel was very popular in Dickens' time. It consists of the wandering journey of a hero through a number of thrilling but unconnected incidents. The hero is forced to live by his wits as he encounters different people (generally of low station) who attempt to cheat him or otherwise use him for their own ends. David's journey from London to Dover follows this picaresque tradition.

After undergoing great hardships during the course of his arduous six day journey from London to Dover, David arrives at his great-aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood's to seek her shelter and patronage. Miss Betsey Trotwood comes before us as a kind but comic woman. It is strange that such an independent-minded and self-willed woman should depend upon the advice of the eccentric Mr. Dick. Her over-reaction to the donkeys trespassing the patch of green in front of her house is very amusing.

CHAPTER 14. MY AUNT MAKES UP HER MIND ABOUT ME

Next morning, David found his aunt at the breakfast table, absorbed in deep thought. At breakfast Miss Trotwood told David that she had written a letter to his stepfather about David's arrival at her house. David

was depressed to think that his aunt wanted to send him back to Blunderstone. He implored her not to send him back, but she was non-committal in her reply. Miss Trotwood asked David to go up and ask Mr. Dick how he was getting on with his memorial. She told him that the real name of the florid gentleman was Richard Babley, but that he hated his name. David found Mr. Dick busy writing. Mr. Dick asked David if he knew the date of execution of King Charles I. He regretted that some trouble out of king Charles's head had been put into his head. Mr. Dick was writing a long "Memorial" to the Lord Chancellor. When a part of the memorial was finished, Mr. Dick used it to make a huge kite. In this way Mr. Dick circulates his "facts a long way". He showed David the large kite that he had made. It was covered with a closely written manuscript. David saw some reference to King Charles's head at one or two places. David thought him quite mad, but a friendly, harmless fellow nonetheless. Later Miss Trotwood talked to him about Mr. Dick. She assured him that he was not mad, though people thought he was. He was a distant relation of hers. Mr. Dick's brother wanted to have him shut up in an asylum but she offered to look after him. She found him to be friendly and amenable. She always found his advice sound.

A reply to Miss Betsey Trotwood's letter arrived, stating that the Murdstones were coming to speak to her about David. David was terrified at the prospect of this visit. When the Murdstones arrived the next day, they immediately incurred the wrath of Miss Betsey Trotwood by guiding their donkeys across the front lawn. David observed Miss Murdstone ride over the green lawn, in front of the cottage, followed by Mr. Murdstone. Not recognising the visitors, Miss Trotwood shook her first at Miss Murdstone, rushed out and pounced on the donkeys' guardian. He managed to break loose. Miss Betsey ignored the visitors. With great dignity she marched into the house. As their arrival was announced by Janet, Miss Trotwood explained that she did not allow any one to ride over her green lawn.

After exchanging a few sharp remarks with Miss Murdstone, David's aunt sent for Mr. Dick. She introduced him as an old friend and said that she relied on his judgement. Mr. Murdstone remarked that David had been the cause of much domestic trouble. He also complained that David was sullen, rebellious and of a violent temper. He claimed to have placed David in a respectable business but he had run away and made himself a vagabond. Miss Trotwood countered by saying that David's interest, particularly his annuity, had not been looked after and that his mother was ill-used. Exasperated Mr. Murdstone stated that he was prepared to take David back but if Miss Trotwood interfered, his doors would be shut against him for ever.

Miss Trotwood asked David if he was ready to return. David requested her not to send him back to Mr. Murdstone. She then asked Mr. Dick what she should do with the boy and after a bit of thought, he replied, "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly". She thanked Mr. Dick for his good

advice. Miss Trotwood asked Mr. Murdstone to go if he pleased. She said she would take chance with David Copperfield. She added that Mr. Murdstone being a tyrant broke Clara Copperfield's heart. She also warned Miss Murdstone that if she ever rode a donkey across her green lawn, she would knock her bonnet off and tread on it.

David kissed his aunt and thanked her heartily. He shook hands with Mr. Dick, Miss Betsey became David's guardian. She decreed that he would now be known as "Trotwood Copperfield". And so David began a new life.

Comments. Miss Betsey Trotwood's character is further developed in this chapter. Her firmness of character, her unyielding nature, her brusque manner—all these traits are illustrated in this chapter. She definitely has the upper hand in her encounter with Mr. Murdstone and his sister as she takes her firm and determined stand against them. Her concern, as evidenced in her guardianship of Mr. Dick, is also worth taking note of. Through the delineation of Miss Trotwood's true character, Dickens seems to be saying that behind the brusque manner as shown in the first chapter lies a compassionate nature.

CHAPTER 15. I MAKE ANOTHER BEGINNING

Mr. Dick and David soon became the best of friends. They often went together to fly the great kite. Miss Betsey Trotwood proved to be very kind. She shortened David's name to Trot.

One evening David was very pleased by his aunt's proposal that he should go to school in Canterbury. The next day they drove to Canterbury. Mr. Dick was much depressed at the prospect of David's departure. In Canterbury, they stopped in front of an old house belonging to Mr. Wickfield, a lawyer. A pale-faced youth of about fifteen opened the door. He had close-cropped hair, no eyebrows and red brown eyes, so unsheltered and unshaded, that David wondered how he went to sleep. He was high-shouldered and bony; dressed in decent black, with a white wisp of a neckcloth; buttoned up to the throat; and had a long, lank, skeleton hand which particularly attracted David's attention. His name was Uriah Heep.

Mr. Wickfield was a pleasant-looking man with a grey head but black eyebrows. He had a very agreeable face. There was a certain richness in his complexion which David connected with port wine. He was very cleanly dressed, in a blue coat, striped waistcoat,and nankeen trousers. Mr. Wickfield took them into his office. After some discussion he took Miss Trotwood to see the school he remommended. In the meanwhile David remained in his office. Uriah Heep, the clerk, was busy in the room opposite. David felt uncomfortable on noticing that Uriah Heep was staring at him stealthily. On her return Miss Trotwood said the school provided many advantages for his pupils, but she was not satisfied with the boarding house shown to her. At this Mr. Wickfield persuaded her to allow David to remain in his house suggesting that she could pay for his board if she wished to.

Mr. Wickfield then took them upstairs to show them his daughter Agnes whom he called his "little housekeeper". She was a motherless girl. She was the 'one motive' of Mr. Wickfield's life. Agnes was a girl of David's age. She had a bright, happy and tranquil face. While parting from David, Miss Trotwood gave him a great parting advice : "Never be mean; never be false; never be cruel". David promised to abide by the instructions of his aunt. He promised to be grateful and obedient.

In the evening David dined with Mr. Wickfield and Agnes who sat opposite him. Then they went to the drawing room. Mr. Wickfield drank a good deal of wine. Agnes played on the piano. She worked and talked. Before going to bed, David went for a walk. When he returned Uriah was busy closing the office. He shook hands with Uriah, but "Oh, what a clammy hand his was ! as ghostly to the touch as to the sight. I rubbed mine afterwards, to warm it, **and to rub his off"**.

Comments. In this chapter we are introduced to three more characters—Mr. Wickfield, his daughter Agnes, and his clerk Uriah Heep. Although Mr.Wickfield is obviously a good man, we notice certain weakness in his character. At present this weakness is revealed in his need to drink a great quantity of wine each night before going to bed. He is devoted to his daughter, whom he calls his "little housekeeper", and she is equally devoted to him. Mr. Wickfield, we are told, has only one motive in life, and that is evidently to take good care of his motherless daughter; but we feel that it is the other way round. David notices a tranquillity about Agnes—"a quiet, good, calm spirit"—that he will never forget.

Uriah Heep is one of the greatest villains in English literature. As yet he is only a boy, and it is not clear whether his ambitions are formed; perhaps they are already in the making. Dickens has, even at this early stage managed to make Uriah Heep so obnoxious physically that after shaking Uriah's hand David has to rub his own hand, "to rub his off".

CHAPTER 16. I AM A NEW BOY IN MORE SENSES THAN ONE

Next morning, after breakfast, David started attending school once again. Mr. Wickfield himself took David to the school and introduced him to his new teacher Dr. Strong a man with a lustreless-eye. David found Dr. Strong almost as rusty as the tall iron rails and gates outside the house and almost as stiff and heavy as the great stone urns that flanked them. His clothes were not well-brushed and his hair not well-combed. His wife Annie was a pretty young lady. There was such a difference between the ages of Dr. Strong and his wife that David at first thought her to be his daughter. In the course of the conversation, Dr. Strong asked Mr. Wickfield if he had found any employment for his wife's cousin, Jack Maldon. Mr. Wickfield replied that he had not yet been able to find any suitable provision for that young man.

David was heartened by the sweetness, availability and simplicity of Dr. Strong's manner. He took David to the schoolroom where about twenty

five boys were engaged in their studies. Adam the head boy came out to welcome David. It was after such a long time David found himself in the company of such boys. David experienced a lot of uneasiness in the school for the first few days because he was afraid lest some of the boys should come to know that he had been associating on friendly terms with a man who had been imprisoned on account of his inability to repay his debts. He was ashamed of the time that he had spent in the warehouse of Messers Murdstone and Grinby in London. He was placed in the lowest form as he know so little. After school hours he hurried off lest he should be asked awkward questions by other school boys.

While they were at dinner Mr. Jack Maldon came in. He said he was prepared even to go abroad. The sooner he went the better. Jack Maldon was handsome, bold and shallow. He was not very respectful to Doctor Strong. He about Annie as if he had a great influence over her. He then left after expressing the hope that Mr. Wickfield would soon do something for him.

After dinner Agnes played on the piano and Mr. Wickfield drank wine. David took out his books. Agnes showed him the best way to understand his books. David found the atmosphere in Mr. Wickfield's house re-assuring and wholesome because of the pleasant manners of Agnes. Agnes began to exercise an influence over David. He assured himself that he loved Emily—but he felt "there are goodness, peace, and truth, wherever Agnes is".

When it was time for bed, David noticed Uriah Heep was still in the office pouring over a huge book. He was busy studying law in order to improve his knowledge. He told David that his mother and his late father were humble folk. He said he himself was too humble to be considered as a future partner, in Mr. Wickfield's business. David's reference to Agnes made Uriah very happy. He invited David's reference to Agnes made Uriah very happy. He invited David to tea one afternoon in his humble dwelling.

Soon David was at home in Doctor Strong's school. It was an excellent school, as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil. It worked on a sound system and had a good atmosphere. Doctor Strong was the kindest and most generous of men. He was the idol of the school. David came to learn that at the age of sixty two, Doctor Strong had married for love Annie—a girl at the age of twenty. Annie was a poor girl and she had a number of poor relations to take advantage of Doctor Strong. The Doctor was busy writing a new dictionary, but his progress in his project was slow. According to head boy Adams' calculation, it would take the Doctor one thousand six hundred and forty nine years to complete his Dictionary.

Mrs. Strong's mother was a lady David took great delight in. She was a little sharp-eyed woman. Her name was Mrs. Markleham; but the boys at the school used to call her "the Old Soldier". She was known for marshalling her poor relations before the Doctor. She was almost a general. One night a small party was held at Doctor Strong's house on the occasion of Jack

Maldon's departure for India.

It also happened to be the Doctor's birthday. Mrs. Strong was dressed in white and wore cherry-coloured ribbons. While she played the piano, Jack Maldon stood by her. She seemed very much low-spirited during the evening. She did not seem to be well enough to play cards or to sing. When Maldon left in the chase, David noticed that his face was agitated and that he was holding something cherry-coloured in his hand. Mrs. Strong was lying in a faint on the hall floor. After she recovered, her mother noticed that she had lost one of her cherry-coloured ribbons. A search was made, but all in vain. On their way home, Agnes discovered that she had left her handbag behind. David ran back to the Doctor's house to bring it. Doctor Strong was sitting in his chair by the fireside. He was reading something from his dictionary. His wife sat on a stool at his feet. She had a pale but beautiful face. It seemed to be covered with a wild, sleep-walking, dreamy horror. She was aroused by David's entrance. Later she seemed to be somewhat consoled.

Comments. In this chapter we see that after an initial period of adjustment, David is happy in Doctor Strong's school, and he has every reason to be. It is "an excellent school, as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil". There is "an appeal, in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys", and the boys feel that they have "a part in the management of the place, and in sustaining its character and dignity".

We also learn a great deal about domestic life of Doctor Strong who at the age of sixty two married for love Annie, a girl of twenty. There seems to be something mysterious about the relations between Annie and Jack Maldon. It is amusing to be told by Adams that it will take the Doctor one thousand six hundred and forty nine years to complete his dictionary.

CHAPTER 17. SOMEBODY TURNS UP

David Copperfield had written to his nurse Peggotty as soon as he settled at his aunt's house at Dover. He returned to her the half-guinea that he had borrowed from her previously. She promptly replied to his letters. She informed him that his old home at Blunderstone was shut up to be let or sold.

Miss Betsey Trotwood came to Canterbury a number of times to see David. Mr. Dick visited him on every alternate Wednesday. He always brought his memorial with him. On one occasion he informed David that there was a man hid near his aunt's house, and he frightened her. He had seen his aunt give money at night to that strantger. Mr. Dick was a universal favourite. He developed friendship with Doctor Strong who used to read out to him passages from his dictionary on their walks together. Very soon Agnes became quite friendly with Mr. Dick. Mr. Dick got acquainted with Uriah Heep also. As for David, his friendship with Mr. Dick had now greatly increased.

One morning, Uriah Heep reminded David of his promise to come to

tea, but he did not expect him to keep the promise as he himself was too humble. David Copperfield; therefore, promised to go that evening. He even offered to teach him Latin, but Uriah was too "humble" to accept the offer. Uriah's mother was his very image. She was only shorter. She declared David's visit to be a great compliment. While they had tea, they asked David Copperfield numerous questions and tried to get out of him such imformation as he had no desire to reveal. David started feeling quite uncomfortable. He wished he could go out finishing the visit in the middle. All of a sudden some passerby stopped near the door and called out to David. It was Mr. Micawber himself. David did not know whether be was glad go see him there. At Mr. Micawber's own request he introduced him to Uriah Heep and his mother. Mr. Micawber was surprised to learn that David was a pupil of Doctor Strong and was making good progress in his studies.

In order to get away David requested Mr. Micawber to take him to see Mrs. Micawber. He took him to the little inn where they were staying. Mrs. Micawber was extremely glad to see him. She told David that her family had given them a cold reception at Plymouth. For this reason, they had borrowed money to return to London. Her family had suggested that Mr. Micawber might go into the coal trade, but they found that capital was needed for that. They were then waiting for a remittance to pay the hotel bill. They invited David to dine with them before they left.

David Copperfield was surprised next evening to see Mr. Micawber and Uriah Heep walk arm in arm. He learnt, the next day when he dined with the Micawbers, that Mr. Micawber had gone to Uriah Heep's house and drunk brandy and water. He had formed a high opinion about Uriah Heep's abilities, and held the view that Uriah Heep was a fellow who might one day become Attorney General. Mr. Micawber also felt that if he had known Uriah Heep when his "difficulties came to a crisis .... my creditors would have been a great deal better managed" than they were. As for Mrs. Micawber she continued to entertain the highest possible opinion about her husband's talents; and she reiterated that she would never leave him. They had a beautiful little dinner. The Micawbers were very jovial.

The next morning, David received a note from Mr. Micawber saying that he was a doomed man because there was no hope of receiving the money from London. Mr. Micawber had also indicated that he would soon be returning to debtors' prison for non-payment of his bill at the inn where he had been staying with his wife. He had given to the management of the inn a note of hand, made payable after fourteen days at his residence in Pentonville in London. David felt very distressed to get this information, and on his way to the school, hurried towards the inn "to soothe Mr. Micawber with a word of comfort". However, he met "the London coach with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber up behind. Mr. Micawber was the very picture of tranquil enjoyment." As the Micawbers had not seen David, he thought it best not to see them. David was both relieved and sorry at their going.

Comments. Several developments take place in this chapter. We are amused by Mr. Dick's visits to David's school to meet him, and by his popularity at the school where he gets acquainted with several boys and with Dr. Strong himself. We are also amused by the mercurial Micawbers—their chronic impecuniosity and their unwavering optimism. Dickens uses the device of coincidence to further the plot. Mr. Micawber accidentally appears at Uriah Heep's door when David is in awkward position and wishes to escape. Mr. Micawber's subsequent association with Uriah Heep leads to unearth the latter's plot of usurping Mr. Wickfield's business and property. Dickens also uses the mysterious stranger to heighten readers' interest and to add an element of suspense to the story.

CHAPTER 18. A RETROSPECT

As David reminisces about his school days, certain episodes stand out clearly. He had great respect for Adams, the head boy. When he attended the services in the Cathedral he could not look at the book as his attention was diverted towards Miss Shepherd whom he adored. She was a little girl with a round face and flaxen hair. She lived in the boarding establishment of Misses Nettingales. They met at the dancing school. David gave her old presents and a kiss. One day she showed her preference for Master Jones and made a face at him. His love for Miss Shepherd proved to be of a short duration.

David fell foul of a Dutcher's son who was always speaking about him in a disparaging manner. He was a bully who often punched the smaller boys of David's school. David could not tolerate his misbehaviour, and so he decided to fight him. David met him by appointment. A selected number of the boys of David's school accompanied him for this appointment. David fought but lost the battle after receiving several injuries. He was taken home in a sad plight. For three or four days he had to remain at home because of the injuries. Agnes nursed him like a sister.

In time, David became the head-boy at the school, and he felt that the boy he was when he had first come to the school was no longer part of him. "That boy is gone"; also gone was the little girl he "saw on that first day at Mr. Wickfield's .... In her stead, the perfect likeness of (her mother's) picture—a child-likeness no more—moves about the house, and Agnes .... is quite a woman". In his thoughts David called her his sweet sister, his counsellor and his friend. She was his better angel. She exercised her calm, good and self-denying influence on him.

At the age of seventeen David Copperfield fell in love with Miss Larkins aged about thirty. She was a tall, dark, black-eyed girl. She was the fine figure of a woman. He went to a ball at the Larkin's house. He danced with her, offered her the flower in his buttonhole and begged a flower of hers in return. She gave the flower that he had sought. He kissed the flower. One day Agnes informed David that Miss Larkins was to be married to an elderly hop-grower, Mr. Chestle. David was "terribly dejected for about a

week or two". He was now seventeen.

Comments. This chapter marks the end of what many critics regard as the best part of the novel—David's childhood and school days. Dickens has portrayed such a realistic and authentic picture of David's childhood that he has become a truly believable character. The portrayal of David's two youthful love-affairs lasting only a few days is also perfectly natural.

CHAPTER 19. I LOOK ABOUT ME, AND MAKE A DISCOVERY

David's school days came to an end, and he departed from school to return to his aunt's house in Dover. David and his aunt held many discussions as to the profession which he should adopt. Mr. Dick was always present at these discussions. As they were unable to come to any final decision, Miss Trotwood suggested that David should travel a little and see life before he made up his mind about the profession which he would like to enter. She encouraged David to visit Peggotty so that he may have "a little change" and thereby form a cooler judgement." David was very delighted at this suggestion. Miss Trotwood gave him a "handsome purse of money, and a portmantean'' (a suitcase).

David went to Canterbury to say good bye to Mr. Wickfield and Agnes. He was asked by Agnes if he had noticed any gradual change in her father. David, with some hestitation, admitted that Mr. Wickfield's habit of drinking had lately increased and it often made him unfit for business. Uriah obviously took advantage of Mr. Wickfield's weakness.

On the occasion of David's visit to Mr. Wickfield, they were invited to tea at Dr. Strong's house. Annie and the Old Soldier Mrs. Markleham were also there. Jack Maldon had written from India that he was in poor health and wanted to return. David also observed that Mr. Wickfield disliked the intimate friendship that existed between Mr. Strong and Agnes.

On the way to London, David Copperfield felt very young and inexperienced when the coachman made him give up his box seat to a shabby man with a squint. He got a bedroom in Golden Cross at Charing Cross. After dinner David went to Convent Garden theatre to see a performance of 'Julius Caesar' and the new Pantomime. On his return to the hotel, he sat down to steak and oysters. When, after one O'clock, he rose to go to bed he realised that the handsome young man who sat in the coffee room was his old friend Steerforth. They were much pleased to meet each other such a long time. Steerforth told David that he was a student at Oxford and was on his way to see his mother who lived a little way out of town. Steerforth ordered the waiter to move David's things to a bedroom next to his. He invited David to have breakfast with him at ten next morning. The new bedroom was much better than the old one. David soon fell asleep.

Comments. In this chapter we see that Miss Betsey Trotwood is very solicitous about David's welfare. She tries her best to help him find his place in the world by giving him a handsome purse of money and by suggesting that David should travel a little and see life to make up his mind.

David betrays his inexperience and immaturity owing to which he is unable to assert himself. In contrast, Steerforth is a man of the world. He knows what he wants and gets it.

Jack Maldon's imminent return from India indicates that some interesting developments are going to take place in the Strong household.

CHAPTER 20. STEERFORTH'S HOME

At breakfast, David was invited by Steerforth to come home with him to Highgate for a day or two. David, therefore, wrote to his aunt to inform her of the change in his programme. David was impressed by Steerforth's knowledge. Steerforth, however, told him that he did not intend to get a degree. He persisted in calling David 'Daisy' and he did not object to it.

They went by a stage coach to Steerforth's home in Highgate, a suburb of London. His mother was an elderly and handsome lady with a proud carriage. She welcomed them warmly. There was another lady called Rasa Dartle. She was about thirty years old. She was thin and dark and not at all agreeable to look at. She had an old scar on her lip. She was the daughter of a cousin of Steerforth's father. On the death of her parents, Mrs. Steerforth brought her to live with her as her companion. The scar on Rosa Dartle's face was caused by a hammer that Steerforth had, in his boyhood, thrown at her.

At dinner, David invited Steerforth to accompany him to visit the Peggotty household. Steerforth was interested and expressed pleasure at the chance "to see that sort of people". Mrs. Steerforth was very much devoted to her son. She seemed to think only about her son and nothing else. Steerforth's bed-room was the picture of comfort. Bright fire was burning in David's bed-room but its atmosphere was spoilt by an ugly picture of Miss Rosa Dartle.

Comments. In this chapter we meet two new characters—Steerforth's mother and her companion Rosa Dartle. The most important characteristic of Mrs. Steerforth's character is the intense love that she feels for her son. He is the apple of her eyes. Mrs. Steerforth values anything related to her son. Her only interest in David is that he is too devoted to her. Miss Rosa Dartle is an odd character. She has a peculiar way of speaking in round about manner and seeking information from people. Steerforth aptly sums her up : "she brings everything to a grindstone and sharpens it, as she has sharpened her own face and figure these years past .... she is all edge".

CHAPTER 21. LITTLE EMILY

During his stay at the Steerforth house, David was much impressed with Littimer, a servant there. Littimer had come into Steerforth's service at the University. He was taciturn, soft-footed, very quiet in his manner, deferential, observant and respectful. "He surrounded himself with an atmosphere of respectability, and walked secure in it. It would have been next to impossible to suspect him of anything wrong, he was so thoroughly

respectable, David says of Littimer.

David and Steerforth joyfully spent one week at the latter's house. Finally they left by the Mail for Yarmouth, and arriving late, spent that night at an inn. The next day David, while on his way to Peggotty's house, passed by the shop of Mr. Omer. It was now named as 'Omer and Joram'. He met Minni and Mr. Omer. He learnt that Emily was under articles to the firm. She had acquired an elegant taste in dress-making. He also discovered that most of the women in the town were against her as she was pretty and had been a little way-ward and spoilt. David peeped through the glass and found Emily at work. She looked a beautiful little creature with a pair of blue eyes.

David called on Peggotty, who at first failed to recognise him. When she recognised him, both of them burst into tears and were locked in each other's embrace. She took him up to see Mr. Barkis who was suffering from rheumatism. Mr. Barkis received David with enthusiasm. He requested him to shake the tassel of his night cap as he could not shake hands. He raised his wife Peggotty but declared that he was a very poor man. He told Peggotty to prepare a good dinner in David's honour. He promised to find a coin if she came back a little later. They went out. Peggotty informed him that Mr. Barkis was then a little'nearer' than before. He also used this device in order to get money out of the box lying under his bed. He, however, declared that his box was full of old clothes. Mr. Barkis groaned as he crawled out of his bed. Later on he called them in and produced a guinea from under his pillow. Soon Steerforth also arrived. He was very charming to Peggotty and to Mr. Barkis.

After dinner, David and Steerforth set out for the Peggotty houseboat. As they walked along the shore, Steerforth commented that "the sea roars as if it were hungry for them. On their arrival they found everybody, including Mr. Gummidge in a state of great excitement. Mr. Peggotty was greatly delighted to see them. He said they had come on the happiest night of his life. He made such a fuss that Emily ran to her bedroom to hide her shyness. Mr. Peggotty told them that Ham had fallen in love with Emily. She had at first said she could never marry him. Later on, she had given her consent to have him. Steerforth congratulated them. He asked Mr. Peggotty to persuade Emily to come back. She came back. She was shy and confused. Steerforth soon made her feel at ease. He entertained all of them throughout the evening. It was almost midnight when David and Steerforth left. As they walked home, Steerforth talked of Emily's beauty and said of Ham, "That's rather a chuckle-headed fellow for the girl, isn't he ?" David was shocked to hear this. He, however, thought that Steerforth must be joking. "Ah, Steerforth ! ..... When I see how perfectly you understand them ...... I know that there is not a joy or sorrow, not an emotion, of such people that can be indifferent to you". Steerforth replied, "I believe you are in earnest, and are good. I wish we all were !"

Comments. An important development in this chapter is Ham's

proposal of marriage to Emily and her acceptance of his proposal. Another interesting development is that Dickens brings two different sets of people together—the simple country people represented by Peggotty, Mr. Peggotty and Ham and the sophisticated town people represented by Steerforth. Their coming together will create complications in the plot. Simplicity and goodness are the most outstanding characteristics of the Yarmouth people. We cannot, however, say the same of Steerforth. Which of them is the real gentleman—it is a question worth thinking.

CHAPTER 22. SOME OLD SCENES, AND SOME NEW PEOPLE

David and Steerforth stayed at Yarmouth for more than a fortnight. Sometimes they remained separate for hours. Steerforth was a good sailor and he went out boating with Mr. Peggotty. Sometimes David went to Blunderstone all alone. The garden of his old home had run wild. Half of the windows of the house were shuttered up. A poor lunatic gentleman and his attendants occupied the house.

One evening, on his return from one of these excursions, David found Steerforth alone in Mr. Peggotty's house, sitting thoughtfully before the fire. The inmates of the house had gone out, and so he had no company at that time. He told David that he had been feeling very gloomy and depressed because of his loneliness. He said he wished he had a judicious father for the last twenty years. Steerforth told David that he had purchased a boat, a clipper. Mr. Peggotty would be its master in his absence. He said Littimer, who had come down would look to the rigging of the ship. Its name was to be changed from 'Stormy Petre' to 'Little Emily'.

They had just left Mr. Peggotty's house, and as Steerforth mentioned Emily's name, she herself appeared there. She was accompanied by Ham. Steerforth did not have a good opinion about Ham's intelligence though Ham was a skilled boat-builder. They talked for a couple of moments and then went their way. A little later they saw a young woman following Emily and Ham.

On getting to their hotel, they found Littimer, Steerforth's servant, already there in response to the latter's instructions, Littimer informed that Miss Mowcher had met him by chance, and that she would be coming to see Steerforth at the hotel. David did not know who Miss Mowcher was; and therefore he eagerly awaited her visit. A little later she arrived. Miss Mowcher was a dwarfish woman of forty five. She had a large head, a double-chin, roguish grey eyes and extremely little arms. She talked gaily with Steerforth. She gossiped, about her numerous clients. Her box contained small bottles, brushes, combs, sponges, curling coins and other things. She had with her scraps of a Russian prince's nails which she regarded as her proud possession. She carried these with her as best introduction to genteel families. She looked at Steerforth's profusely dark hair with a magnifying glass. She told him that but for her services he would be bald in a year. She started dressing his head. They continued gossiping. Miss Mowcher said

that she had not seen a pretty woman in Yarmouth, Steerforth, however, remarked that he could show her one. David said that he was referring to Emily who was both pretty and virtuous and was engaged to a worthy man. Steerforth expressed the view that Emily might do better for herself and was born to be a lady. Miss Mowcher made a cryptic remark saying'E' stood for Emily, enticing, engaged, elopement. Miss Mowcher then offered to work on David's head, but he declined the offer. She took her fee of five shillings and departed.

A little later David and Steerforth returned to the house of Mr. Barkis. He found Ham waiting outside for Emily. Emily was inside talking to a poor woman named Martha Endell. Martha was a school fellow of Emily. She had once worked for Mr. Omer. Presently Peggotty called them in. Martha was sitting on the floor with her head and arm resting on a chair. Emily who had been crying, told Ham that Martha wanted to go to London where she would begin a new life. Ham gave her his canvas bag and she gave some money to Martha. Martha kissed her hand and weeping aloud went out of the house. Emily also sobbed and said she herself was not so good and grateful as she ought to be. Ham and Peggotty tried to comfort her. Emily kissed Ham and held his hand in both of hers when they went out.

Comments. Steerforth's relationship with the Peggotty family continues to grow. Steerforth buys a boat which he renames the **Little Emily** and which he proposes to put under Mr. Peggotty's charge. Is it an act of charity or an attempt to buy Mr. Peggotty over? We are surprised to find an extrovert like Steerforth in a despondent mood. Steerforth cannot help talking of little Emily. He describes her as "The prettiest and most engazing little fairy in the world .... I swear she was born to be a lady". In the same chapter, we find little Emily sobbing : " I am not as good a girl as I ought to be ! Not near ! Not near !". Is there any connection between their despondent moods ? Does Little Emily see in the fate of Martha Endell something of her own possible fate ? She tells Ham, "Oh, my dear, it might have been a better fortune for you if you had been fond of someone else— of someone steadier and more worthier than me".

Neither Miss Mowcher nor Martha Endell has any direct connection with the story of the novel. Dickens has introduced them to arouse humour and pity respectively.

CHAPTER 23. I CORROBORATE MR. DICK, AND CHOOSE A PROFESSION

Steerforth and David departed by coach the next morning, leaving Littimer behind to "do what he has to do", as Steerforth cryptically commented. They departed to the regret and admiration of all concerned, and left a great many people very sorry behind them. During their journey back to London, David told Steerforth about the previous night's encounter with Martha Endell, the "fallen woman". David sought Steerforth's advice

about which profession he should pursue. He inquired about being a proctor, a job suggested to him in a recent letter from his aunt, but Steerforth remarked that it was a dull job. He explained that a proctor was "a sort of monkish attorney" who practised in courts held at Doctors' commons, (Doctors' commons was the name of a locality situated close to St. Paul's Churchyard). On his further explaining the functions of a proctor, David felt inclined to accept his aunt's suggestion that he should take up that profession. Mr. Dick had whole-heartedly agreed with his aunt on this point.

On his arrival in London, David met his aunt who had come there from Dover in order to meet him, and who was staying in a hotel. She was delighted to see David again. After supper she discussed with David his future. He said he liked the idea of being a proctor but he wanted to spare her the expense. She said she would have to pay a thousand pounds to article him. She insured him that he had been a credit and a pleasure to her. She said she would be adequately repaid if he proved to be a loving child to her in her old age.

The next day David and his aunt set out for the office of Messers Spenlow and Jorkins in Doctor's Commons. Miss Trotwood was afraid of pickpockets. She gave David her purse which contained ten guineas and some silver. An ill-dressed aman followed them. Miss Trotwood felt very much agitated. To David's great astonishment. She told him to get her a coach and wait for her in St. Paul's Churchyard as she had to go along with that man. After David has waited for half an hour in the churchyard, she returned alone. She requested David not to refer to that incident again. She gave him her purse to pay the driver. Significantly David noticed that only the silver remained, the guineas had gone.

They met Mr. Spenlow at Doctor's Commons. He was a little, light-haired gentleman. He had accurately curled whiskers. Mr. Spenlow frequently referred to his partner Mr. Jorkins. David was quite dismayed by the idea of terrible Mr. Jorkins. Later on David found out that Mr. Jorkins was a very mild man. He always remained in the background. He was presented to outsiders as a very obstinate and merciless person. His image as a tyrant was a ruse to pressurise people. It was agreed that David would begin his month's probation as soon as he liked. Mr. Spenlow told him what sort of place it was. David saw some gentlemen in red gowns and grey wigs sitting on two sides of a raised platform. They were known as the Doctors. The presiding judge sat at a little pulpit desk. A number of men like Mr. Spenlow, wearing black gown with white fur, sat at a long green table.

Miss Trotwood and David went to look at a set of rooms which they had found advertised. They rang two or three times before a stout woman named Mrs. Crupp made her appearance. She took them to the top of the house. There they saw a bed room, a sitting room and a pantry. The furniture in the apartment was faded but otherwise good. The river was visible from the window of the apartment. David was delighted with the

place though they learned that the last occupant had died of drink. Miss Trotwood took the rooms. Mrs. Crupp agreed to cook for them. David took up his residence in the apartment. Miss Trotwood returned to Dover.

Comments. An important development takes place in this chapter. A career is now chosen for David through his aunt's kindness. Miss Trotwood reveals her benevolence and love for David as her attempt to settle him in life costs her quite a fortune. The mysterious stranger reappears in this chapter. A natural question arises in our mind : Who is this man who so terrifies Miss Trotwood ? We meet some new characters. They are Mr. Spenlow in whose office David bas been articled, and Mrs. Crupp, the landlady in whose house David is going to stay.

CHAPTER 24. MY FIRST DISSIPATION

David was delighted with his apartment. It was wonderful thing for him to walk about in London with the key of his chamber in his pocket. But soon he started feeling lonely and wondered why Steerforth had not come to visit. On the third day he walked to Highgate to meet his friend Steerforth. Steerforth was away. He, therefore, stayed to dinner with Mrs. Steerforth. The next day Steerforth walked into his apartment David invited him to dinner that evening and requested him to bring his friends also.

Mrs. Crupp engaged a young man to wait at table and a girl to wash the plates. On her advice David Copperfield gave extensive orders at the pastry cook and the wine merchants.

Steerforth brought his friends Grainger and Markham with him. They were gay, lively fellows. Steerforth was requested by David to sit at the head of the table. Everything was good. All of them drank the wine. David felt annoyed on seeing the handyman with a bottle at his mouth and the young girl tramping on the plates with which she had lined the kitchen floor. After the departure of the servants David Copperfield passed the wine faster and faster.

Everyone consumed a great deal of wine, and David soon became "singularly cheerful and light-hearted" and tried smoking for the first time. They decided to attend the theatre, and on the way out, David was conscious of someone falling down the stairs. He was surprised to find that it was he.

In the theatre David felt as if the whole building was going to swim. They decided to go downstairs to the dress boxes. David was taken to one of them. People looked at them angrily and called 'silence". There David Copperfield saw Agnes sitting with some friends. He tried to talk to her but she begged him to be quiet. She seemed greatly upset by his behaviour. She soon turned and requested David to go home. He managed to go home. The next day David was plagued with remorse and shame—and with a headache.

Comments. This is one of the most hilarious chapters in this book. The way David gets intoxicated and makes a fool of himself during the dinner is very realistic portrayal of David's process of growing up. David's

discomfiture at the behaviour of his servant employed for the occasion is an example of Dickens humour. His attempts to talk to Agnes in the theatre are also very amusing.

CHAPTER 25. GOOD AND BAD ANGELS

Two mornings after the dinner party, while David was still experiencing remorse over his conduct, he received a letter from Agnes informing him that she was staying at the house of her father's agent in Ely Place, Holborn, and that he should meet her there. David went to Agnes, in a mood of repentence and apologised to her for his conduct at the theatre. Agnes was forgiving and David called her his "good angel". To this, she replied that if he really thought her to be his good angel, he should be on guard against his bad angel, Steerforth. David, however, insisted that Steerforth was a good and loyal friend.

After they had talked for some time Agnes asked him to promise to tell her whenever he was in love or in trouble. She told David about Uriah Heep's presence in London. She feared he was about to enter into partnership with her father. Uriah was subtle and watchful. He made himself indispensable by taking advantage of the weakness of Mr. Wickfield. Partnership was being forced on Mr. Wickfield. David was indignant about this and told Agnes that she must prevent this. Agnes, however, requested David to be congenial to Uriah for her father's sake.

The next day David attended a dinner party at Mr. Waterbrook's. David discovered that Mr. Waterbrook was a middle aged man with a short throat. He looked like a pug-dog. He introduced David to Mrs. Henry Spiker, an awful lady in a black velvet dress. Uriah Heep was also there. While David was with Agnes, he saw Uriah's "shadowless eyes and cadaverous face, to be looking gauntly down ..... from behind". David was pleased to find Tommy Traddles, his old schoolmate, at the party. Traddles was a retiring young man with spiky hair. He had been invited at the last minute to fill a vacancy David learnt that Traddles was preparing for the bar and, at the same time, working for the pompous Mr. Waterbrook.

David was glad, after dinner, to go upstairs talk to Agnes and to introduce his old friend Traddles to her. When David left, Uriah followed him. Remembering the advice of Agnes, David invited Uriah Heep to his apartment for coffee. Uriah revealed his increasing sense of power and even confided that he loved Agnes and hoped to marry her. David, he felt like piercing him with the redhot poker. He, however, managed to control himself. He asked Uriah if Agnes knew his feelings. Uriah said that she did not know his feelings yet. He hoped his usefulness to her father would make her kind to him. It was half past one. Uriah made himself comfortable by the fire refusing David's offer of his bed. David was thankful when Uriah Heep left his place before breakfast next morning. He asked Mrs. Crupp to "leave the windows open, that my sitting-room might aired and purged" of his presence.

Comments. In this chapter, we are impressed by the forgiving and understanding nature of Agnes. Agnes is the first person in the book to understand the true character of Steerforth. On the face of it, Agnes's remark about Steerforth is a little surprising because, so far, he has charmed everyone with his perfect manners. But later her remarks will prove to be prophetic. Despite his insistence on being humble, Uriah Heep has become very ambitious. From a humble clerk he rises to become Mr. Wickfield's business partner. David is appalled by the prospect of his marrying Agnes.

CHAPTER 26. I FALL INTO CAPTIVITY

David saw no more of Uriah Heep, until the day when Agnes left London. He went to the coach off to sea her off, and there he found Uriah Heep returning to Canterbury by the same coach. Agnes was sitting inside while Uriah Heep was sitting on the back seat of the roof. David was uneasy and feared that Uriah might succeed in his desire to marry Agnes. He had now begun to hate this man. Steerforth was now at Oxford, and although letters pass between them, David remembered Agnes' warning and harboured "some lurking distrust" of him. He felt that he was under the influence of Agnes. When he was not at the Commons, he was very much alone.

David was now articled to Messrs Spenlow and Jorkins, and he was getting a generous allowance from his aunt. In order to while away his spare time, he began to write verses. One day Mr. Spenlow invited him to spend a week-end at his house. He knew that Mr. Spenlow was a widower with one daughter who had recently returned from Paris after finishing her education there. As soon as David saw Dora, he was totally overcome with her loveliness. "All was over in a moment. I had fulfilled my destiny. I was her captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction. Dora had a 'confidential friend' to look after her. She was no other than Miss Murdstone. David had no idea of what he had for dinner etc. His mind was fixed on inimitable Dora. She had fascinating ways and a charming appearance. She had a delightful little voice and pleasant laugh. After dinner, in the accompaniment of a guitar, Dora sang French ballads.

The next morning David got up early. He started strolling in the garden. He met Dora there and paid her a few compliments in a clumsy manner. He enraged her lovely dog Jip whom she took in her arms and petted. Jip seemed to be jealous of David and continued barking. Dora told David that she found her 'confidential friend' Miss Murdstone a tiresome guardian. They went to the greenhouse and admired the geraniums together. Miss Murdstone found them there and asked them to go in to get their breakfast. David came back on Monday morning. For weeks he dreamed of fascinating Dora. He brought beautiful clothes and walked for miles daily in the hope of seeing Dora.

Comments. An important development takes place in the plot of the novel in this chapter. David falls in love with Dora Spenlow. David's feelings for Dora have been realistically handled. He grows lyrical while

praising her ineffable beauty. Most critics think that David's feelings for Dora are based on Dickens' own experience. At the age of eighteen, Dickens fell in love with Maria Beadnell, but her father sent her away to Paris so that she could not see the young suitor, there is a very unlikely coincidence in Miss Murdstone's reappearance. There is no reason why she should join as an employee in the Spenlow household. It, however, helps Dickens manage his intricate plot.

The description of a youngman in love is very humorous. Mr. Crupp, David's landlady tells him, "A young gentleman may be over-careful of himself, or he may be under-careful of himself. He may brush his hair too regular, or too unregular. He may wear his boots much too large for him, or much too small. That is according as the young gentleman has his original character formed. But let him go to which extreme he may, sir, there's a young lady in both of 'em'.

CHAPTER 27. TOMMY TRADDLES

One day David went to visit, Tommy Traddles, his old school-fellow, who lived in a street near the veterinary college at Camden Town. It was a dirty street with houses built on one nonotonous pattern. The streets were littered with garbage and junk. David found Traddle's apartment house, whose genteel air "reminded him of the days he spent with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. Traddles warmly welcomed David to his neat but thinly furnished little room. They discussed their school days and Traddles' life since leaving school, Traddle explained to David that he went to his uncle's household to live, but his uncle did not like him. After his uncle's death, Traddles began to copy law writings for living and then to "state cases" and make abstracts. This led him to the study of law, which exhausted his limited funds. It was with great difficulty that he had raised the hundred pounds for being articled. He had managed to collect the money by working for a man who was compiling an Encyclopaedia. He was engaged to a curate's daughter—one of ten sisters—in Devonshire. He expected it to be a long engagement, but they had made a beginning by buying two small pieces of furniture—a flower pot and a little round table with a marble top.

David was surprised and delighted to learn that Traddles' landlord was Mr. Micawber, who was still patiently waiting for something to turn up. Mr. Micawber did not recognise David at the first instance. But when he did he very fervently called his wife. Mr. Micawber was in financial difficulties but he was preparing for a vigorous leap forward. Mr. Micawber was in a delicate state of health as she was expecting another child. She was overcome to see David Copperfield after such a long time. David was invited to dinner but declined the invitation; instead, he asked them to dine with him at a later date..

Comments. The Micawbers suddenly reappear in this chapter, as Miss Murdstone had done in the previous chapter. David is surprised and delighted at this unexpected encounter with the Micawbers. We are amused

by Mr. Micawber's grandioquent manner of speech. There is going to be an addition to the Micawber family. Mr. Micawber speaks about it in these words :

"You may, perhaps, be prepared to hear that Mrs. Micawber is in a state of health which renders it not wholly & improbable that an addition may be ultimately made to those pledges of affection which—in short, to the infantine group".

The chapter is also remarkable for the graphic description of the locality where Traddles lives :

"The inhabitants appeared to have a propensity to throw away little triffles they were not in want of, into the road : which not only made it rank and sloppy, but untidy too, on account of the cabbage-leaves. The refuse was wholly vegetable either, for I myself saw a show, a doubled-up saucepan, a black bonnet, and an umbrella, in various stages of decomposition, as I was looking out for the number I wanted".

CHAPTER 28. MR. MICAWBER'S GAUNTLET

Dora had now become an obsession with David. Whenever he was not busy with his professional work, he was with thoughts of her. David made arrangements about the dinner party which he planned for the Micawbers and Tommy Traddles. Mrs. Crupp agreed to entertain the Micawbers provided David dined away from home for a fortnight afterwards. David provided at dinner a pair of soles, a leg of mutton and a pigeon pie. The young girl was engaged on the condition that she should only bring the dishes and then withdraw. David bought a bottle of Lavender water, two wax candles, pins and a pin-cushion to help Mr. Micawber in her toilet at his dressing table.

The three visitors, arrived at the appointed time. They were pleased to see David's rooms. After they had eaten the rolls, the meal came to an end. The mutton was red inside and covered with grit as it had got dropped in the ashes. The young girl had spilt the gravy on the stairs. There was not much under the crust of the pie. Mr. Micawber's good humour, however, relieved the failure of the meal. On his suggestion mutton was cut into slices. He salted and peppered them. David cooked them on the grid iron. Mr. Micawber heated some mushroom ketch-up. They then enjoyed the crisp slices of mutton as they were of the grid-iron.

They were at the height of enjoyment when Littimer made his appearance. He had come to inquire whether he had seen Steerforth. David replied that he had not. Littimer hoped that Steerforth would probably be coming up from Oxford the next day. He requested him to sit down, and then took over the task of preparing the remainder of the mutton. During Littimer's presence, everyone was uncomfortable, and it was only when the servant left that they seemed "to breathe more freely". Before Littimer went, David asked him if he remained long at Yarmouth. Littimer replied that he had stayed to see the boat completed, but he did not know whether

Steerforth had seen it.

After Littimer's departure, Mr. Micawber prepared punch. They drank it with Mr. Micawber offering the toast "to the days when my friend Copperfield and myself were younger, and fought our way in the world side by side".

The conversation then turned to Mr. Micawber's employment. It was agreed that the corn business, in which Mr. Micawber was employed, was not very profitable and that Mr. Micawber should advertise his talents in the papers—"throw down the gaunteet" to society—to see what would turn up.

Only then some one would step forward and employ him on remunerative payment. David talked of the cost of advertisement. Mrs. Micawber said the money would have to be raised on a bill. Then they drank to the honour of Tommy Traddles' beloved Sophy. Blushingly David proposed a toast to 'D'. Mr. Micawber was delighted at David's having a sweet-heart. He ran to the next room to inform Mrs. Micawber of this happy news. The Micawbers left between ten and eleven. David Copperfield advised Tommy Traddles not to lend Mr. Micawber anything. Traddles had already put his name to a bill of Mr. Micawber's.

Soon after their departure, Steerforth appeared. As a result of Agnes' warning, David had been feeling a slight uneasiness about him. However, he was so overjoyed at seeing his friend that he felt "confounded and ashamed" at having doubted him, Steerforth had just come from Yarmouth.

He had brought for David a letter from Mr. Peggotty. He also informed him that Mr. Barkis was very ill. Steerforth persuaded David to spend the next day with him at Highgate. He, therefore, decided to go to Yarmouth the day after.

While undressing for bed David Copperfield read the letter that Mr. Micawber had given him while leaving his place. Mr. Micawber had written that he was chrused and hopeless. His house, his belongings and those of Traddles were in the legal possession of a broker. Mr. Micawber could not pay the bill which Traddles had signed and it was already overdue.

Comments. This chapter reveals the different facets of various characters. Mr. Micawber is a complete failure in life. In spite of his being a failure, Mrs. Micawber is confident of the talents of her husband. The Micawbers are all the time hoping for something to turn up. We are greatly amused by the inconsistency of both Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. Mr. Micawber is despondent in a moment, and cheerful the next. David comments : "His recent despondency, not to say despair, was gone in a moment". Mrs. Micawber complains of her misfortunes but "the lark was never gayer than that excellent woman".

In sharp contrast to the Micawbers, David has certainly matured. He realises that Mr. Micawber is a failure, and he advises Traddles not to co-sign any bill with him.

Steerforth, while discussing the imminent death of Mr. Barkis, reveals a ruthlessness in his nature. "It's a bad job .... but the sun sets every day, and people die every minute, and we mustn't be scared by the common lot. No ! Ride on ! Roughshod if need be, smoothshod if that will do, but ride on ! Ride on all obstacles and win the race".

CHAPTER 29. I VISIT STEERFORTH AT HIS HOME AGAIN

After getting a few days leave from Mr. Spenlow, David Copperfield went to Highgate. Where Mrs. Steerforth and Rosa Dartle cordially receive him. He was surprised to find Littimer absent. He felt uneasy because of the scrutiny exercised by Rosa. In the afternoon she talked to David about Steerforth's misbebaviour and blamed David for his long absence from home. David assured Rosa that he was not responsible for that. Miss Dartle hinted that something might cause a quarrel between Steerforth and his mother.

Steerforth flattered Miss Dartle into playing the harp and singing for them. David commented that her song was the most "unearthly" he had ever heard. After Miss Dartle had finished playing Steerforth laughingly put his arm around her and said, "come, Rosa, for the future we will love each other very much ! "Rosa became as furious as a wild cat. She promptly struck him and angrily left the room. David asked why she did this, but Steerforth .eplied that he did not know, but that she was "always dangerous".

Before retiring for bed, Steerforth told David that if anything untoward happened David should think of him at his best. Before leaving the next morning David looked in at Steerforth sleeping peacefully in his bed. In retrospect, David realised that he would never see Steerforth again as a friend. "Never more, oh, God forgive you, Steerforth ! to touch that passive hand in love and friendship. Never, never more !"

Comments. In this chapter, our attention is focussed on the character of Miss Rosa Dartle. She is an inquisitive spinster who tries to extract as much information from others as possible. And she has a roundabout way of speaking. It seems that Rosa Dartle loves Steerforth, in spite of the fact that she is a few years older than he. It is, however, neurotic sort of love, mixed with much bitterness and hatred. She has concealed her emotions behind an attempt to be self-effacing. Miss Dartle has shrewdly guessed that Steerforth is involved in some secret activities. But she does not know any details. That is why she questions David, but he too is ignorant.

We wonder why Steerforth has taken a promise from David to judge him always by his best behaviour.

CHAPTER 30. A LOSS

David arrived in Yarmouth in the evening and took a room in the village inn because he felt that the spare room at Peggotty's house was probably taken by "the great visitor—Death". At ten o' clock at night, he went out of his hotel room just to walk around. Finding Mr. Omer's

establishment still open, he went into it. Mr. Omer was unable to give him the latest news about Mr. Barkis. It was not proper for a man in his line of business to ask how a sick person was. He, however, told David Copperfield that Emily seemed to be in a very unsettled state. She seemed to grow fonder of her uncle every day. Ham had got a little house and it was now completely furnished. Had Mr. Barkis not fallen ill, they would have got married by now. Word arrived that Barkis was unconscious and beyond help, and David rushed to the house.

David found Mr. Peggotty, Ham and Emily at the house of Mr. Barkis they thanked him for being kind enough to come. Emily seemed shaken and chilled. Emily trembled and hung upon her uncle. She refused to go home with Ham. Peggotty requested David to come up and meet Mr. Barkis. He was lying speechless and senseless. He half-rested on the box which contained his money. He had got his box placed on a chair at his bedside. After some time Mr. Barkis muttered something about driving David to school. With a pleasant smile on his face he distinctly muttered "Barkis is willing". It being low water, he went out with the tide.

Comments. This chapter is full of pathos. The death of a good man like Mr. Barkis is very moving, with the death of Barkis we see how Dickens disposes of his characters—to clear the way for further development, to provide drama and pathos, and to pick up loose ends.

CHAPTER 31. A GREATER LOSS

David was entrusted with the will of the deceased Mr. Barkis, and he prided himself on his ability to read the document and distribute the items in the proper manner. Being a proctor, he knew the legal implications of a will, David had found the will in the mysterious box which Barkis carried with him religiously all these years. That it might escape notice, he had invented a fable and written on the lit that it belonged to "Mr. Black-Boy to be left with Barkis till called for". Along with the will the box contained "miniature cups and saucers, a horseshoe, a polished oyster shell .... and almost three thousand pounds". Of this, he bequeathed the interest of one thousand pounds to Mr. Peggotty for his life. On Mr. Peggotty's death, the principal was to be equally divided between Peggotty, Emily and David. The rest of the property had been bequeathed to Peggotty.

Only Peggotty, Mr. Peggotty, and David attended the funeral, Peggotty decided to go to London with David the following day in connection with the legal formalities to be gone through with regard to her husband's will. All of them were to meet in Mr. Peggotty's old boat-house that night. Going there, David found Mr. Peggotty, Peggotty and Mrs. Gummidge there. Everyone tried to cheer up Peggotty by telling her that she did her duty by the departed, and the departed knew it. Mr. Peggotty lighted the candle for Emily, as he had done for so many years, and placed it in the window. He vowed that even after Emily was married, he would continue to put the candle in the window, "pretending I'm expecting of her, like I'm a—doing

now". Ham arrived at the house, but without Emily. He drew David out of the house and wept as he told him that Emily had eloped with her lover. He prayed to God to kill her before she came to ruin and disgrace. Mr. Peggotty also realised that something dreadful had taken place. He looked out, Ham gave David Emily's letter to read. She was sad at leaving her home and was ashamed of her wickedness. She said she would never come back unless he brought her back a lady. She had a great love for her uncle. She hoped that Ham would marry some good girl. Mr. Peggotty asked the name of the man with whom Emily had eloped. Ham cried, "Mas's Davy, it ain't no fault of yourn—and I am far from laying of it to you—but his name is Steerforth, and he's a damned villain". It seemed Littimer had made the arrangements on behalf of his master Steerforth. He had accompanied Emily early that morning to a coach in which Steerforth was waiting on the Norwich Road.

Mr. Peggotty declared, "I'm a—going to find my poor niece in her shame, and bring her back. No one can stop me ! I tell you I'm a—going to seek my niece". Mrs. Gummidge collected her wits, stopped feeling sorry for herself, and, for the first time, took a mature interest in handling affairs. She dissuaded Mr. Peggotty from leaving the house that very night. David heard him crying, and he too cried.

Comments. This is a very poignant chapter. The elopement of Emily, who is no longer little, comes as a stunning shock not only to the members of Peggotty household, but also to David and us. This is the climax of the Emily—Steerforth sub-plot. The "wild" and stormy night serves as a fitting background to what turns out to be a major incident in the novel.

The chapter also brings out the development of David as a mature and sensible youngman. After Barkis death, David takes charge of the situation as he originates the suggestion that the will should be looked for in the box. He feels "supreme satisfaction" as he is the only one who is able to read and execute the will.

At the same time, we wonder whether the charge of sentimentalism laid against Dickens is not justified. It is not only Mr. Peggotty but also David who cries after the elopement of Emily.

CHAPTER 32. THE BEGINNING OF A LONG JOURNEY

Although Steerforth had run off with Emily, David still thought of all the favourable things about him. David's distress was great but somehow he could not condemn him because of the deep admiration he had always felt towards him. "In the keen distress of the discovery of his unworthiness, I thought more of all that was good in him, I did more justice to the qualities that might have made him a man of noble nature and a great name than ever I had done in the height of my devotion to him." David chose to think of Steerforth as "a cherished friend, who was dead".

The news of Emily's elopement had soon spread through the town. By next morning, Mr. Peggotty's head was bowed more than it had in all the years David had known him. David found him on the beach with Ham.

Both were miserable, and yet both looked steady like the sea itself. Ham said that, if he ever encountered Steerforth, he would kill him. Mr. Peggotty declared that he was going to seek Emily, and that he would accompany David to London for that purpose if the latter had no objection. Back in Mr. Peggotty's boat-house, David discovered that a great change had come over Mrs. Gummidge. She was sobbing and crying because of what had happened, but now she was more worried about Mr. Peggotty than about anything else. She had forgotten her own loneliness and distant with life, and tried to offer whatever comfort she could to Mr. Peggotty.

That night Peggotty slept at the boat-house and David at Peggotty's. David was sitting near the kitchen fire when he heard a knock at the door. It was Miss Mowcher standing under a great umbrella. She appeared very upset. She came in and told David that her life was hard. In order to suppo· herself, her brother and her sister, who were all poor, she had to work for and be pleasant to people who made fun of her. She had been deceived by Littimer to believe that it was David who wanted to elope with Emily and that Steerforth saw to it that no harm came to the plan. Under this deception she had given Emily a letter from Littimer. Two nights earlier Miss Mowcher had heard certain news which had made her suspicious, but she came to Yarmouth too late to be of any use. She believed Steerforth and Emily had gone to some foreign country. She promised to help in tracing out Emily and vowed, "Littimer had better have a bloodhound at his back than little Mowcher".

The next morning Peggotty, Mr. Peggotty and David left for London. Ham placed all his earnings at the disposal of Mr. Peggotty. In London they found a clean house near David's apartment. Mrs. Crupp felt offended when Peggotty started dusting David's bedroom.

Mr. Peggotty and David called on Mrs. Steerforth. She already knew what her son had done. Mr. Peggotty asked Mrs. Steerforth to read Emily's letter and asked her if she thought Steerforth would make her a lady. Mrs. Steerforth bluntly told them that it was simply impossible for her son to marry an uneducated ignorant girl having such humble relations. Mr. Peggotty stated that Emily would never be disgraced by her relatives. Mrs. Steerforth said that if Steerforth returned without Emily, she would forgive him; otherwise "he never shall come near me". She annoyed Mr. Peggotty by offering compensation. She accused Mr. Peggotty of causing a great difference between herself and her son. Rosa Dartle tried to sooth her. Mrs. Steerforth seemed to be as stubborn, unyielding and wilful as her son. Rosa followed them. She accused David that he had caused a rift between self-willed mother and son by bringing Mr. Peggotty along with him. She said, if it had been in her power, she would have got Emily whipped and branded and her family trampled upon. She would like to hunt Emily to her grave.

Mr. Peggotty took a little money from his sister to begin his search. "If any hurt should come to me, remember that the last word I left for her

was , ' My unchanged love is with my darling child, and I forgive her !".

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for its dramatic quality. First David is unexpectedly visited by a tearful and agitated Miss Mowcher who reveals how she had been tricked into sending communications between Emily and Steerforth through Littimer. And then there is Mr. Peggotty's encounter with Mrs. Steerforth. The characters of Mr. Peggotty and Mrs. Steerforth are sharply contrasted. The forgiving nature of Mr. Peggotty is completely opposed to the cold and callous nature of Mrs. Steerforth. Dickens depicts the upper class as heartless and cruel. Both Mrs. Steerforth and Miss Rosa Dartle appear as extremely callous women. Miss Dartle calls the Peggotty grop a "depraved and worthless set" but actually it is the other way round.

CHAPTER 33. BLISSFUL

All this time David had gone on loving Dora more than ever. Her thoughts haunted his mind. "I was not merely over head and ears in love with her, but I was saturated through and through". His love for Dora occupied his mind so much that he took Peggotty into his confidence. He despised the man who did not realise how wonderful Dora was. In the meantime, he managed Peggotty's affairs, "proving the will" and putting all her business in orderly manner. After the legal matters were settled, David took Peggotty to the "Commons office" to pay her bill, and was startled to meet Mr. Murdstone in Mr. Spenlow's company. There was little change in Mr. Murdstone. The conversation amongst Mr. Murdstone, David, and Peggotty was very strained, as David still remembered the heartaches this man had caused him. Mr. Murdstone was in the law office to obtain a marriage license so that he could marry a beautiful and wealthy girl who had just come of age.

David and Mr. Spenlow went into court to settle a divorce case and afterwards they had a lengthy discussion about the law. David felt that many aspects of the law were in need of reform and suggested some changes in the working at the Prerogative office, but the conservative Mr. Spenlow considered it "the principle of a gentleman to take things as he found them". Mr. Spenlow informed David that Dora's birthday was to be celebrated next week and invited him to join them in a picnic on the occasion. David was thrilled at the opportunity of meeting Dora, so he promptly gave his consent.

On the day of the picnic David hired a gallant grey horse, bought a bouquet of flowers and rock to the Spenlow home. Sitting on a garden seat under a lilac tree Dora appeared to be the very picture of beauty. Her bosom friend Julia Mills, a sweet woman of twenty, was by her side. Her dog Jip was there. He was jealously furious when David offered a bouquet to Dora. David was much pleased to learn that Miss Murdstone had gone to attend her brother's marriage and would be away for about three weeks. David

also learned that Miss Julia Mills was unhappy because of misplaced affection. She, however, was in a position to take a calm interest in the hopes and loves of youth.

Mr. Spenlow, Miss Mills and Dora went to the picnic in an open carriage. David rode behind them. He kept gazing at Dora who took a great care of the bouquet presented by David. His jealousy knew no bounds when he found that there were people waiting for them at the appointed picnic spot. David particularly disliked a particular young man with red whiskers who paid attentions to Dora. Feeling jealous he started flirting with a young woman wearing a pink dress. After dinner he strolled off in an angry mood. Miss Mills brought Dora up to him. She asked him not to permit an ordinary misunderstanding to wither the blossoms of love. David took Dora's hand and kissed it in reconciliation. He also kissed Miss Mills' hand. In fact, he felt that I was at this time in the seventh heaven. Soon afterwards, Dora was asked to sing a song. David brought Dora's guitar-case out of her father's carriage. Dora began to play on the guitar and sing a song. Miss Mills also sang a song. Soon the party broke up.

During the return journey Mr. Spenlow fell asleep and David rode as near Dora as possible. Miss Mills told David that Dora was going to stay with her and that her father would be pleased to see him if he paid them a visit. David was elated once more. After enjoying some refreshment at Mr. Spenlow's house David rode back to London.

Three days after the picnic, David went to visit Dora. He decided to declare his passion for Dora. Dora was busy copying music and Dora was trying to paint the flowers that he had presented her. Miss Mills was considerate enough to let David meet Dora alone for a while, David told Dora how happy he felt in her company at the picnic. She, however, referred to his flirtation with Miss Kitt who was in pink. After much timidness, David burst forth with his feelings. He took Dora in his arms and told her he loved and worshipped her. She cried and trembled. The more David raved, the more Jip barked. Both of them were in a state of rapture. They got engaged. Miss Mills gave them her blessings. David measured Dora's finger for a ring that was to be made of forget-me nots, a pretty toy with blue stones. Within a week David and Dora had their first quarrel, and Dora sent back the ring. David went to Miss Mills and met her in a back kitchen. She brought Dora. They got reconciled very soon and decided to correspond with each other through Miss Mills.

Comments. The most important development in this chapter is David's betrothal to Dora. At last David musters up courage to declare his love for Dora and they become engaged David's feelings for Dora have been realistically presented. Like Miss Murdstone in chapter 27, Mr. Murdstone reappears in this one. There is an autobiographical touch in this chapter. Early in his life, Dickens worked as a lawyer's clerk. Working in that position, he had an opportunity of observing the weaknesses of the law and its workings. David also discusses the shortcomings of the law with

Mr. Spenlow and feels that many aspects of the law are in need of reform and suggests some changes.

CHAPTER 34. MY AUNT ASTONISHES ME

As soon as David was engaged with Dora, he wrote to Agnes. He tried to make her comprehend how blessed he was and what a darling Dora was. He was anxious to impress Agnes with his sincere love for Dora. He also wrote about Emily's elopement, but he did not mention the name of Steerforth in this connection. He received an answer by return of post.

Traddles paid David a visit and they exchanged conversation about their fiancees. Sophy, Traddles' fiancee, lived in Devonshire. She was the fourth of ten children. Her mother was an invalid. It had fallen to her lot to look after the entire household, "She is quite as much a mother to her mother, as she is to the other nine".

From Traddles David came to know that Mr. Micawber, being unable to pay his debts, had changed his name to Mortimer. Traddles had put his signatures to a second bill for Mr. Micawber. The pawn broker who had lent money to Mr. Micawber had carried off even his little round table and Sophy's flower-pot and stand. He found these articles lying for sale in the broker's shop. Now the pawnbroker raised the price whenever Traddles tried to buy them back. He wanted to know if Peggotty would be kind enough to purchase these articles from the broker for him at a reasonable price. David promised to help Traddles provided he agreed not to lend his name or anything else to Mr. Micawber in future. After a bit of bargaining Peggotty bought both the articles from the broker at fairly easy terms. Traddles was happy to get his things back.

On retruming to their rooms Peggotty and David found Miss Betsey Trotwood sitting on her luggage with her two birds before her and her cat on her knee. Mr. Dick was leaning thoughtfully on a large kite. He had piles of luggage lying around him. Miss Trotwood insisted on calling Peggotty by the name of Mrs. Barkis. She considered Mrs. Crupp who had served tea as a wealth-worshipper and time-server. After tea David's aunt told him that she had lost all her wealth and was ruined. "All I have in the world is in this room, except the cottage", she said; and that must be put up for rent. Miss Betsey, however, was undaunted, and she told David, "we must meet reverses boldly, and not suffer them to frighten us ..... We must live misfortune down".

Comments. Miss Betsey Trotwood's financial ruin marks an important development in the plot of the novel. David had just begun to experience bliss when this crisis strikes. David will have to show his maturity and prove his mettle. He is now called upon to help his aunt who had befriended and helped him when he was in trouble. The account of the household of Traddles' fiancee Sophy is very amusing.

CHAPTER 35. DEPRESSION

As soon as David could recover from the shock of his aunt's financial ruin, he asked Mr. Dick to take possession of the bed which Mr. Peggotty had recently vacated. He had a long discussion with Mr. Dick about his aunt's poverty. When Mr. Dick began to cry, David had to cheer him up. It was decided that Miss Trotwood was to have David's bed, and he was to lie in the sitting room, to keep guard over her. Peggotty and Mr. Dick left for the night, and David and his aunt talked about Dora, his new-found love. Miss Trotwood hoped that she was not silly or light-headed. She, however, did not interfere with the relationship. David told his aunt how much he and Dora loved each other. Miss Trotwood then expressed her approval of Peggotty (whom she named 'Barkis') even though "the ...... ridiculous creature ...... has been begging and praying about handing some of her money" to Miss Trotwood. Finally David and his aunt retired for the night, but David was too upset to sleep. He felt that the changed circumstances would adversely affect his hopes in regard to Dora. He had dreams of poverty the rest of the night. His aunt came twice or thrice and whispered "poor boy".

Next morning David visited Mr. Spenlow and told him about the loss of his aunt's fortune. He requested him to cancel his articles and return her money. Mr. Spenlow remarked that his partner Mr. Jorkins would never allow it. David went to Mr. Jorkins and stated his case. He was surprised to find that Mr. Jorkins was mild and smooth-faced man of sixty. He was sorry to learn that Mr. Spenlow had refused David's request. As David was going home in a despondent mood, a hackney cab stopped near him. Agnes had come with her father and Uriah Heep. She had received Miss Trotwoods letter regarding her adversity. Agnes and David walked home together. She informed him that Uriah Heep and his mother then lived in Mr. Wickfield house. On arrival home Agnes and David found Miss Trotwood in a state of excitement after a difference of opinion with Mrs. Crupp. Agnes turned pale on finding Miss Trotwood mention her loss. Agnes feared lest her father should be held responsible for this. David's aunt, however, assured her that money had been lying safe with Mr. Wickfield. She lost everything, except the cottage when she invested all her money by himself. She hoped to get a rent of about seventy pounds a year from her cottage. Mr. Dick had an income of about a hundred pounds a year, but that was to be spent on himself alone. By good luck, David's room had been paid for the next half-year.

David decided to earn some money. Agnes told him that his old teacher Doctor Strong, wno had retired, and who had come to reside in London needed the services of a secretary.

Mr. W ckfield and Uriah Heep came there. David was shocked to see that Mr. Wickfield had grown very weak and depended wholly on Uriah Heep. "The reversal of the two natures, in their relative positions, Uriah's of power and Mr. Wickfield's of dependence, was a sight more painful to

me than I can express. If I had seen an Ape taking command of a man, I should hardly have thought it a more degrading spectacle". With much squirming and jerking of his body Uriah paid compliments to Agnes in particular—Miss Trotwood told Uriah Heep to control his limbs and not to act in a silly manner. On the departure of Uriah, Mr. Wickfield became more like his former self.

Comments. We admire Miss Betsey Trotwood for the fortitude with which she faces her misfortune. We also learn that Miss Trotwood has some reservations about David's beloved, Dora. She feels that in the matter of love, David is "blind, blind, blind". In her opinion David needs someone to sustain him and improve him. "Agnes silently listens to David's recital of his love for Dora. The gentle and helpful nature of Agnes is underlined once again. Uriah Heep appears in an even more disagreeable light.

CHAPTER 36. ENTHUSIASM

In high spirit David set out to prove himself worthy of his aunt's faith and Dora's love. The next day he paid a visit to Doctor Strong in his highgate residence. Doctor Strong was delighted to see David. After some preliminary talk, David told him of his financial straits. Doctor Strong employed him as his secretary on part-time basis. The arrangement stipulated that David must work every morning and every evening, five days a week for a remuneration of seventy pounds a year, allowing him to pursue his studies for the rest of the day. Then David went in to see Mrs. Annie Strong. Presently Jack Maldon arrived to ask if she would go to opera that night. She, however, preferred to remain at home.

Impatient to do even more odd jobs, David went to see Traddles who was now living in Castle Street, Holborn. He also took Mr. Dick with him. His purpose was to inquire about earning more money by reporting the debates in parliament for a newspaper. Even though Traddles told him about the extreme difficulty of mastering "the mystery of shorthand writing and reading", David decided to start work on it immediately. Then they considered the problem of Mr. Dick. Upset by Miss Trotwood's reversal of fortune, Mr. Dick constantly fretted about having nothing useful to do. This prompted Traddles to suggest that he should copy legal documents. Within a few days Mr. Dick had earned ten shillings and nine pounds. This gave Mr. Dick such joy and satisfaction that he confided to David that he was sure that he would be able to provide for Miss Trotwood.

Traddles was so excited by Mr. Dick's success that he nearly forgot about a letter which Mr. Micawber had sent to David by him. In the letter, Mr. Micawber informed him of his intention of moving away to accept another position connected with a learned profession. He invited his two friends to a small celebration at his present abode near Gray's Inn Road on the eve of his departure.

Arriving at the Micawbers David learnt from him that he was shifting to Canterbury to serve Uriah Heep in the capacity of a confidential clerk.

Mr. Micawber praised Uriah Heep as a man of remarkable shrowdness and felt that he would relieve Mr. Wickfield of his financial difficulties. Mrs. Micawber was so much optimistic that she hoped her husband could very reasonably rise up to be a judge or even a chancellor. Mr. Micawber gave Traddles an I.O.U. for £ 41, 10s., 11 ½d. He did so with so much ceremony that he seemed to be paying the money instead of borrowing it. They parted heartily.

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for the determination and enthusiasm with which David tries to prove his worth. David accepts his new responsibilities as the bread earner of the family and rises to the considerable aplomb. His determination to master shorthand so that he can report debates in Parliament reveals the nobler side of his character. His development into a mature youngman can be better understood if he is compared with other characters much older than he in the novel. Mr. Dick, otherwise an impractical philosopher, also tries his best to help Miss Trotwood in her misfortune. The Micawbers continue to amuse us. When Mrs. Micawber expresses her hope that Mr. Micawber might rise up to be a judge, he remarks, " 'If am reserved to wear a wig, I am at least prepared, externally', in allusion to his boldness, 'for that distinction. I do not regret my hair, and I may have been deprived of it for a specific purpose'.

CHAPTER 37. A LITTLE COLD WATER

David had not so far informed Dora of his changed circumstances. However, he was very keen to meet her and acquaint her with what had happened. On learning that Dora was to go to Miss Mills' house for tea on the coming Saturday, he decided to go there in response to Miss Mills' earlier invitation. By that time Miss Trotwood had fully settled down in David's chambers despite the opposition of Mrs. Crupp. Mrs. Crupp tried to intimidate Miss Trotwood as she had done to intimidate Peggotty but Miss Trotwood proved too strong a character for her, and David observed that Mrs. Crupp "subsided into her own kitchen", under the impression that David's aunt was mad. Peggotty was still in London, and, although she lived in separate lodgings, she used to come to David's chambers to help his aunt in household work. It was time for Peggotty to return to Yarmouth. David saw her off at the coach-office and they parted with many mutual assurances of friendship. Peggotty asked David to inform her if he wanted money at any time. Miss Trotwood made many improvements in domestic arrangements.

On the appointed day, David went to Miss Mill's house. Dora came into the drawing-room to meet him. Without preparing her for the sad news, he asked her if she could love a beggar. She was much upset and terrified. She wept bitterly. David had much difficulty in soothing her. David tried to explain that he deeply loved her, but she told him, "Don't talk about being poor, and working hard". She was more concerned about whether or not her dog Jip, would have a daily mutton-chop. When she was calm, David asked

her if she would agree to learning something about house-keeping accounts and a little cookery book. This suggestion affected Dora so much that David feared he had almost killed her. Miss Mills came in. She soothed Dora and established peace between the two lovers. Dora went upstairs to wash eyes with rose water. David asked Miss Mills' advice regarding housekeeping accounts and the cookery book. She told him that Dora was "a favourite child of natur. a thing of light and airiness and joy" and that the suggestion was not suitable to Dora. They were happy again after tea. When Dora came t know that David got up at five o' clock in order to work, she said it was ridiculous nonsensical to do so. David continued loving Dora entirely and completely. But he went on, too, working pretty hard, and busily keeping red-hot all the irons he now had in the fire.

Comments. In this chapter Dickens reveals the character of Dora Spenlow. "A favourite child of Nature, a thing of light and airiness and joy Dora betrays her impractical and simple nature. She lives in a romantic world of imagination and fails to understand the practical affairs of the world, used to a life of ease plenty, she does not know what want and poverty. Instead of helping her lover in his predicament, she is more worried about her dog's food.

CHAPTER 38. A DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP

David did not allow his resolution to learn shorthand to slacken. He purchased a book on shorthand and began learning it. He found it very hard to understand the mystery of shorthand. Indeed, it was a heart breaking experience. But he was stimulated by his love for Dora and aided by Traddles' advice.

Traddles gave David the necessary dictation. His rooms in Buckkingham Street assumed the role of the Parliament. David worked as hard as he could. He attended his office and Doctor Strong's residence punctually.

One morning going to the commons David found Mr. Spenlow looking serious. He asked David to accompany him to a coffee house. They found Miss Murdstone waiting for them in a room upstairs. She produced a packet of David's letters to Dora tied in a blue ribbon. She had suspected something wrong as the number of letters received from Miss Mills was abnormally large. The previous evening Jip had got hold of letters and Miss Murdstone had managed to get it from his mouth and read it. It was from David Copperfield. Later on she rebuked Dora and recovered that packet of letters from her.

Mr. Spenlow was very angry and blamed David Copperfield for his stealthy and unbecoming action. He blamed him of betraying his confidence. David told Mr. Spenlow how much he loved his daughter. Mr. Spenlow refused to hear anything about an engagement in view of David's youth and his daughter's station in life. He wanted an end to the whole affair which was no better than nonsense. Mr. Spenlow did not want a piece of youthful

folly to influence the suitable provision that he had made for his daughter. He went to the extent of threatening to change his will if necessary, Mr. Spenlow said that he would forget the matter if David forgot about marrying Dora. Mr. Spenlow gave him a week to reconsider, and if David decided not to, he would send Dora abroad again.

David Copperfield wrote to Miss Mills and met her in the back kitchen that evening. She had received a letter from Dora requesting her to come as the secret of her love for David was revealed. Miss Mills told David that now a deep gulf separated him from Dora. She remarked that love always suffered in this cruel world, and that in his case also the same thing had happened. She did not wish to give him any false hope. Miss Mills promised David th t she would find some means of assuring Dora of his devotion of misery.

The next Saturday David went to the Doctor's Commons. He soon realised that some calamity had occurred and learnt that Mr. Spenlow was dead. His phantom had come home empty the previous evening. He had been found on the roadside more than a mile off. He had fallen down in a fit. David wrote to Miss Mills who replied the next day. She said Dora was overpowered with grief and was crying "Oh dear Papa, Oh poor Papa !" Mr. Jorkins made a search for Mr. Spenlow's will but found none. It was discovered that Mr. Spenlow had been spending beyond his income and had reduced his private means to a low ebb. After the sale of the furniture and the lease at Norwood, his assets were found to be less than a thousand pounds. Two elderly aunts of Dora proposed to take Dora with them to Putney. Soon after the funeral Dora, Jip and Miss Mills went to Putney. And the only news David heard of her was by way of a journal kept by Miss Mills, his "soie companion of this period".

Comments. A major complication develops in this chapter. Mr. Spenlow comes to know of David's secret love affair with Dora, his daughter, and feels indignant with David. Mr. Spenlow forbids him to meet his daughter any longer. Although Mr. Spenlow's sudden demise resolves this crisis, it creates further problem for Dora because Mr. Spenlows has died without leaving much of a legacy for her. Critics hold that the key episode in this chapter is antiobiographical in nature. Mr. Spenlow warns David that Dora might be sent to Paris to prevent her marriage with him. Mr. Beadnell, father of Dickens' sweet heart, had actually done so. After Mr. Spenlow's death, David is able to marry his beloved, but Dickens was not so fortunate.

CHAPTER 39. WICKFIELD AND HEEP

Aunt Betsey, seriously uncomfortable by David's prolonged depression, sent him to Dover to find out if everything was going on well at her cottage, which had been rented out to a tenant. She hoped that this responsibility would alleviate his depression. Janet was now working as a maid servant in Dr. Strong's household in Highgate. David rapidly concluded

the business in Dover and went to Canterbury to visit Mr. Wickfield and Agnes. He found Mr. Micawber dressed in black working in the small offfice. He told David that he had tenanted Uriah's old home while Uriah Heep bad himself moved into Mr. Wickfield's house along with his mother David realised that a change had come upon Mr. Micawber. He spoke nicely of Uriah Heep. He, however, avoided discussing the affairs of Mr. Wickfield and Uriah Heep.

David was pleased to meet Agnes who received him most warmly. He told her that her advice in the past had always proved to be most sound. He found if difficult to confide in Dora in the same way because Dora was so "easily disturbed and frightened". David discussed the trouble in his affair with Agnes as he knew that she would be a great source of comfort to him. She advised David to pursue an honourable course and to write to Dora's aunts, tell them what had taken place and to seek their permission to visit Dora.

While David Copperfield was at Canterbury, Mr. Wickfield after getting Uriah's consent invited him to stay at his house. Uriah's mother, in obedience to her son's instructions, saw to it that David and Agnes did not meet alone. David thought of the Heeps as "two great bats hanging over the whole house and darkening it with their ugly forms". Next day the watching began again, and lasted all day.

David went for a walk in the evening. Uriah Heep followed him. David made it clear that he did not like being watched. Uriah told him that all was fair in love and war and that David was his dangerous rival. David reluctantly told him that he was "engaged to another young lady". Uriah felt satisfied and gave him a squeeze of his hand. He promised to remove his mother from watch duty at once. At the same time, David pointed out to him that Agnes was as far above him as the moon, and that it was most unrealistic on his part to think of marrying Agnes. Uriah told David Copperfield in confidence that because of his humility he had made much progress. At this time a realisation came upon David that Uriah Heep was a very mean, merciless and revengeful person.

After dinner Uriah Heep made Mr. Wickfield to drink a large quantity of wine. When he expressed his wish to be Agnes's husband, Mr. Wickfield fell very much annoyed. He was almost mad with rage. He called Uriah his torturer and a mill-stone round his neck. Obviously Mr. Wickfield was no better than a tool in wicked Uriah's hand. Later that night David made Agnes promise never to sacrifice herself to a mistaken sense of duty. He told her that her heart was a priceless gift. She appeared to be agitated at his words, but she assured him that he need not worry on her account.

Next morning as David was leaving Canterbury, Uriah Heep met him again and explained that he had made up his quarrel with Mr. Wickfield and that he and Mr. Wickfield were once again good friends. He admitted that perhaps he had "plucked a pear before it was ripe". But, said the sinister Uriah, "It ripen yet ! I can wait !"

Comments. This chapter is concerned mainly with the character of Uriah Heep who has begun to show his true colours. He regards David is a dangerous rival for the love of Agnes and sets up a watch over him. But the moment David informs him that he is engaged to another young lady, Uriah promises to take off mother. His protestations of "humbleness" are as many as ever, but his account of his early education shows that his "false humility" is a policy rather than a personal philosophy. David comments, "I had never doubted his manners, his craft and malice, but I fully comprehended now, for the first time, what a base, unrelenting and revengeful spirit, must have been engendered by his early, and this long, supprehension". We also notice an un-Micawberly reticence in Mr. Micawber as if he were under some pressure.

CHAPTER 40. THE WANDERER

On his return to London, David had serious conversation with Miss Trotwood about what he had witnessed in Mr. Wickfield's house. Aunt Betsey felt very disturbed to learn about the developments in that house. David also showed his aunt the letter he had written to Dora's aunts with whom she is now living in Putney. Aunt Betsey approved of the letter, and David duly posted it.

One snowy night while returning home from Doctor Strong's, David passed a woman who looked towards him, and then disappeared. He remembered having seen that woman, but could not recall where he had seen her. Seconds later, he realised that the woman whom he passed was Martha Endell, the "fallen woman" whom Emily had once helped. A little later, David was surprised to see the stooping figure of Mr. Peggotty standing on the step of St. Martin's Church, on a route David took only because of the storm. Neither of them could speak a word. They, however, shook hands. David took Mr. Peggotty to a room in the Golden Cross Inn. His hair was long and ragged. His face was burnt dark by the sun. He had wandered through France and Italy without meeting Emily. While they were talking like this, David become aware of Martha Endell listening by the door. She begged David by a gesture of her hands not to betray her presence.

Mr. Peggotty told David that he had returned to Yarmouth four days ago where Mrs. Gummidge had given him three letters. The first letter contained a fifty pound bank note. The second one contained five pounds and a letter from Emily to Mrs. Gummidge requesting her for news about her uncle.The instructions regarding the address were not clear and no one could guess her place of concealment. Mrs. Gummidge, however, with Ham's help wrote an answer. The third letter contained ten pounds. It had been posted from a town on the Upper Rhine. Therefore, Mr. Peggotty had decided to go there in search of his niece. Mr. Peggotty vowed that he would go ten thousand miles to get Emily back and to return the money to Steerforth. After a while they parted, and the grieving uncle "resume his

solitary journey". David searched for Martha but she had disappeared.

Comments. This chapter is remarkable for its pathos. The pathetic account of the noble Mr. Peggotty's journey in search of Emily is very moving. Undaunted by hardship, the loving "father" seeks his wayward child in all corners of the world. The sudden entry and disappearance of Martha Endell add suspense to the plot.

CHAPTER 41. DORA'S AUNTS

At last David received an answer from Dora's aunts, Miss Lavinia and Miss Clarissa Spenlow. They said he could call on a certain day accompanied by a confidential friend. Miss Mills was unable to help David further as her father had decided to go to India and to take her with him. David went to Putney in the company of his friend Tommy Traddles.

As David left his lodging, Mr. Dick threw one of the shoes after him for good luck. On the way Traddles passed the time with the story of his own engagement to Dophy and the objections he encountered from her family. This made David even more nervous.

The two Spenlow sisters were dressed in black and reminded David of two birds, "having a sharp, brick, sudden manner ...... like conaries". They were both upright in their carriage, formal, precise, composed, and quiet. The younger sister, Miss Lavinia Spenlow took charge of the interview. She was considered an authority on the affairs of the heart by her elder sister Clarissa. Lavinia had previously fascinated one Mr. Pidger who was now dead. The beginning of the interview was quite disastrous. Miss Lavinia Spenlow mistook Traddles for David Copperfield. David took the opportunity to assure the aunts of Dora that he loved her as nobody had ever loved anybody else.

After a good deal of discussion Miss Lavinia told David that he would be permited to visit the house three times a week. In the beginning the visits were to be regarded as being made to the aunts. They could not recognise the engagement till they had got some time for observation. They wanted Dora to give them a assurance, on his word of honour, that no communication of any kind would take place between him and Dora. They insisted that David and Traddles should consider this proposal for fifteen minutes. Then David was allowed to see Dora in another room. She was standing behind the door stopping her ears. Jip was also present. Dora cried at first, but both of them were soon very happy.

Aunt Betsey was very happy to learn that every thing had gone quite well. She agreed to call on Dora's aunts soon. David was pleased to find that his aunt got on quite well with Dora's aunts. Jip, however, refused to show any friendly feeling towards Miss Trotwood. David felt troubled on one count. Everybody seemed to regard Dora as a child. Miss Trotwood called her "Little Blossom". Her aunts petted her and waited on her. When David talked to Dora she called her 'cruel Doady'. He was later on charmed by her request for a cookery book and her desire to know how the accounts

were to be kept. David bought a cookery book for Dora and presented it to her on his next visit. It caused her headache. The figures in the problems concerning accounts made her cry. She found it difficult to add up the sums. She preferred to draw pictures all over the books. David failed in his attempt to teach housing to Dora and decided just to enjoy her company.

Comments. Miss Spenlows' permission to David to court Dora clears the way for their ultimate union. In this chapter Dickens presents a clear picture of Dora. She comes out as simple and charming but shallow and impractical person, a "pretty toy". She is unable to take anything seriously and face the practical affairs of life. Throughout the chapter there is an undercurrent of humour. Traddles' porcupine-like hair, his account of his engagement to Sophy and the objections of her family, the description of Spenlow sisters, and Jip's standing over the cookery book—all are very humorous.

CHAPTER 42. MISCHIEF

David worked very hard at shorthand. He tried to do well here as he had done elsewhere in his life.

Mr. Wickfield and Agnes came on a fortnight's visit to Doctor Strong. Uriah and his mother also came and stayed in the neighbourhood of the Doctor. Uriah told David that he was jealous of Agnes's friendship with Mrs. Strong. He was afraid Mrs. Strong might put Agnes against him. Uriah made some insinuating remarks regarding Mrs. Strong's friendship with her cousin Jack Maldon.

David was deeply hurt to realise that Uriah Heep had it in his power to destroy Doctor Strong's peace of mind. He felt greatly repelled by Uriah Heep.

On Saturday David took Agnes to meet Dora. He was in a flutter of pride and anxiety; "pride in my dear little betrothed, and anxiety that Agnes should like her". Dora was afraid of meeting Agnes because David had said Agnes was a clever young lady. She, however, felt very friendly on seeing her. David was pleased to find them so friendly. The gentle cheerfulness of Agnes greatly touched Dora and her aunts. Towards the end of the visit, Dora privately asked David what relation Agnes was to him. David informed her that Agnes was not a blood relation of his, but they had been brought up together as brother and sister. In fact, Dora wondered why David had fallen in love with her rather than with Agnes. On their way back, David expressed his apprehension about the intentions of Uriah Heep regarding Agnes. Agnes, however, assured David that she would never take the step that he feared she might take i.e. she would never marry Uriah Heep. This assurance gave David unspeakable relief.

After leaving Agnes at the house, David saw a light in Doctor Strong's study. He went in to bid the Doctor goodnight. He found Uriah and Mr. Wickfield too. The Doctor sat with his face in his hand. Mr. Wickfield stood by him. He seemed to be very much distressed. Uriah had mentioned to Doctor Strong the general suspicion regarding his wife's affair with Jack

Maldon. David could have strangulated Uriah to death. Mr. Wickfield admitted that he himself thought Annie might have married the Doctor for "worldly considerations only". David tried to soothe the Doctor, but he could not state that he never had any suspicious in this regard. Doctor Strong talked tenderly and respectfully of his wife. He said his wife's name must never be coupled with a word of doubt. Doctor Strong blamed himself for the situation because his wife was so much younger than he, and he could not help but regard Annie as the "wronged" partner. He did not want them to say anything more on the subject.

Doctor Strong requested Mr. Wickfield to take him upstairs. After their departure David called Uriah a villain and slapped him on his cheek. Uriah said he had no mind to quarrel with him. He said he forgave David. He tied his face with a handkerchief and talked to David as if nothing had happened. Later David learnt that Uriah Heep had to go to a dentist in London to have one of his teeth pulled out.

It seems Mrs. Strong had no suspicion about what had happened. After a few weeks a change was visible on her face. An unhappy shadow fell on her beauty. Doctor Strong became more serious ; but he treated his wife with great kindness. He always arranged some amusement for her, away from home. Mrs. Markleham was also ready for entertainment, but Mrs. Strong seemed unhappy over this estrangement from her husband. David often noticed her "with her eyes full of tears". A change had come upon Doctor Strong also. He looked older in appearance and mare grave. He was sometimes visited by Mr. Dick who had become very intimate with him when Mr. Dick used to visit David in Doctor Strong's school. On these occasions, David saw the Doctor and Mr. Dick walking up and down in the garden discussing the Dictionary. Mr. Dick also helped Annie water the plants. Only Mr. Dick served as a link between Doctor Strong and Annie.

One day David received a letter from Mrs. Micawber. She said Mr. Micawber was a changed man. He had become secretive, reserved and gloomy. He was stiff with the children and looked cruelly on the baby. He threatened to kill hemself whenever she asked for money. In reply David requested Mrs. Micawber to treat her husband with kindness and patience. This letter from Mrs. Micawber, however, deeply upset David.

Comments. In this chapter attention is focussed on another innocent woman, Annie Strong. Uriah Heep's villainy is emphasised by his casting slanderous aspersions upon Doctor Strong's wife. Although David comes to Annie's resume and strikes Uriah Heep, he is unable to counter the schemes of the villainous clerk. Doctor Strong blames himself for the situation and regards his wife as the wronged partner. His reaction to Uriah Heep's charge against the conduct of his wife is most noble and arouses our sympathy. Mrs. Micawber's letter reinforces our earlier impression that Mr. Micawber is working under some pressure.

CHAPTER 43. ANOTHER RETROSPECT

David reminisces about his life and remembers how his love for Dora

continues to grow.

Weeks, months, seasons passed. He had now attained the age of twenty-one and had come to a man's estate in the legal sense. He had, by now, "tamed that savage stenographic mystery". He had now begun to earn a respectable income by means of this art. He acquired a good reputation for succesfully reporting the debates in Parliament for a morning newspaper. Traddles also tried his hand at the same avocation, but he did not achieve any success in this direction. He was called to the bar, and he was able to earn good money by practising law. David had achieved some success as an author also. He was writing for a magazine. Altogether he was well off. He had shifted from Buckingham Street to a pleasant little cottage. He and Dora were to get married soon. His aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood was to live in a small cottage in the neighbourhood. Dora purchaseed a Chinese house with bells on top for Jip.

Miss Lovinia and Miss Clarissa, Dora's aunts, had given their consent to the marriage and were in a state of frenzy trying to make the bride's ward-robe. Aunt Betsey helped by hunting for furniture in the London stores while Peggotty cleaned and recleaned the cottage where David and his new wife would live.

David often saw Mr. Peggotty passing through the dark streets at night. He used to look at the faces of the wanderers. David seldom talked to him at such hours as he knew his feelings.

David seemed so be in a happy dream. Agnes and Sophy came to London. They acted as Dora's bridesmaids. Traddles very proudly introduced Sophy to all of his friends. She had a very agreeable and pleasant face, though not very beautiful. David's aunt was dresed in lavender silk with a white bonnet. Mr. Dick who was to give Dora away had his hair curled. Traddles wearing a combination suit of cream and light blue colour attended on David. The wedding looked like a dream. It was followed by a breakfast with plenty to eat and drink. David made his speech in a dreamy fashion. Then Dora went away to change. After much laughing and crying Dora got ready. David, Dora and Jip drove away together. David awoke from his dream to believe that he was at last married to Dora. His dear little wife was after all beside him.

Comments. This chapter marks the cultivation of David's love-affair with Dora Spenlow-into marriage, David is so happy on the occasion that everything seems to him a more or less incoherent dream. The chapter also contains some autobiographical details and is based on Dicken's own beginning as a writer. He became a parliamentary reporter for the **London Morning Chronicle,** and during this time his first article about London life was published in magazines. In 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth, although he cared more for Mary Hogarth, his wife sister. In *David Copperfield* David's love is divided between Dora and Agnes, whom he first loves as a sister.

CHAPTER 44. OUR HOUSEKEEPING

Their honeymoon was soon over. The bridesmaids had gone to their respective homes. And David found himself sitting down in his own small house with Dora. They were both inexperienced so far as running a household was concerned. Indeed, no two birds knew less about house keeping than David and Dora did. They engaged a maidservant called Mary Ann Paragon to run the house, but she was a great source of trouble to them. They had an awful time with her. In fact, she prayed upon their minds dreadfully; and she became the cause of the first quarrel between the young husband and wife. As David was not getting any proper meals, he asked Dora to do something in the matter. But Dora, thinking that he was criticising her and not the maid-servant, charged him of treating her cruelly. David tried to sooth her, but cried and made him feel remorseful. David asked his aunt to explain house-keeping to his wife, but she refused and told David that he must have patience with "Little Blossom" and to "estimate her ...... by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have". She went on to say, "This is marriage, Trot ; and Heaven bless you both in it, for a pair of babes in the wood as you are !"

After Marry Ann they had a number of inefficient servants. When David and Dora went shopping, the merchants cheated them. Their expenses were very high. One evening David brought Traddles home to dinner. Nothing was at its proper place in the room. The way was blocked by Jip's Chinese house. Traddles sat huddled up among Dora's guitar case, her flower painting and David's writing table. Jip walked about the table and even to put his foot into salt or butter. On this particular occasion Jip frequently barked at Traddles. Moreover, David wondered why their joints of meat had such extraordinary shapes. After the departure of Traddles, Dora requested David to teach her. She asked him to address her as 'child wife' so that he could make excused for his foolishness. Dora purchased an account-book. She stitched the pages of the cookery book torn by Jip. She made a great effort to be a good wife. She could never add up the figures in the account book. David tried to help her, but when he appeared to be serious, she became frightened and confused. Then David would set the pencil aside and call for the guitar.

On David's return from debates, Dora invariably came downstairs to greet him. He worked at home till late at night and she sat quietly by his side. She felt proud of providing him with a pen etc. She felt glorified whenever she was asked by David to copy a page or two. Dora moved round the house with the bunch of keys jingling at her waist. She seldom locked the places to which the keys belonged. Dora was pleased, and this pleased David. Dora and David's aunt were very pleased with each other. David never saw his aunt show so much of sympathy for anyone else.

Comments. There is an undercurrent of humour running throughout this chapter. The inefficiency of servants and the dishonesty of shopkeepers and others cause many anxious moments to David and Dora. Their own

inexperience only helps to increase their troubles and mar their conjugal bliss. All the efforts made by Dora to learn house-keeping end in smoke. All these things, howsoever, troublesome to the couple concerned, are a rich source of humour to us. The behaviour of jip, the dog, adds to the comedy of situation. However, Aunt Betsey must be appreciated for her refusal to interfere in David's conjugal life and for her sound advice to David to be patient with Dora.

CHAPTER 45. MR. DICK FULFILS MY AUNT'S PREDICTIONS

It was some time since David had left the Doctor, having in his neighbourhood, he frequently visited Doctor Strong and observed that his marriage was becoming more troubled. Mrs. Markeleham, the "old Soldier", had now started living under Doctor Strong's roof in order to keep company with her daughter who was often in low spirits. She dragged Anni around to operas, concerts, and other forms of entertainment, even though Annie would prefer to stay at home. Although Doctor Strong encouraged Annie to get out more, the selfish Mrs. Maıkleham unknowingly widened the gap between the couple. It rarely happened now that Mr. Jack Malden accompanied them. Sometimes Aunt Betsey and Dora were invited to go with them. Mr. Dick was disturbed over the growing estrangement betweeı Doctor Strong and Annie because both were his friends.

Aunt Betsey never lost her confidence in Mr. Dick. Nor did her admiration for him diminish. While speaking with David, she predicted that Mr. Dick would soon "distinguish himself in some extraordinary manner". One night Mr. Dick visited David in his parlour. During the course of his conversation, he said that, although Doctor Strong was an excellent man and Mrs. Strong was beautiful like a shining star, there seemed to be something wrong with their conjugal life. David replied that there was some unfortunate division between them. Mr. Dick thereupon declared that he would do something about it. He knew as he was thought to be a simpleton, nobody would mind what he did.

One evening in the autumn David and his aunt walked upto Doctor Strong's house. Mrs. Strong had been working in the garden and Mr. Dick had been helping her. Doctor Strong was busy in his study. In Mr. Strong's company they went into the drawing room. Mrs. Markleham also came in. She blurted out that Doctor Strong was in the study along with his lawyers and was making his will. She had heard the Doctor say that he had great confidence in his wife and wanted to leave everything for her without laying any condition.

After the lawyers had departed they went into Doctor Strong's study. Mrs. Strong who was pale and trembling glided in on Mr. Dick's arm. She fell on one knee at the Doctor's feet and raised her hands appealingly. Mr. Dick asked the Doctor what was amiss. Mrs. Strong begged her husband to state what had come between them. Doctor Strong said that the fault was his alone and that there was no change in his love for his wife. Annie Strong

asked if there was any friend who could mediate in the matter. David now decided to speak. He revealed what had transpired between wicked Uriah Heep and Doctor Strong. Mrs. Strong kissed her husband's hand. She told him how much she loved him. She felt distressed to know that her family had traded on him in her name. She admitted that as a child she had been fond of Maldon. Had she married him, her life would have been miserable. She said there was no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose. She then assured her husband "....... in my lightest thought I have never wronged you—never wavered in the love and fidelity I owe you". She clarified that she was ashamed and grieved on the night of Maldon's departure for India because he had spoken some words which should never have been spoken. This led to a complete reconciliation between Doctor Strong and his wife Annie. Miss Betsey attributed the success of the affair to Mr. Dick : "you are a very remarkable man, Mr. Dick !"

Comments. In this chapter the complication arisen out of Uriah Heep's slandering of Annie's conduct is resolved. Poetic justice is meted out as the selfish nature of Mrs. Markleham is exposed. One of the subplots in the novel has run its course and culminates in the reunion of the "devoted" Doctor and his faithful wife. Mrs. Strong makes a very sound comments : "there can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose". For once Mr. Dick distinguishes himself as he performs the miracle of bringing about the reunion of Doctor Strong and Annie.

CHAPTER 46. INTELLIGENCE

David had been married almost a year when one evening he was returning hame from a solitary walk. At this time he was living with his wife in Highgate. By now he had become famous as a writer. In fact he had just commenced writing his first word of fiction. While walking back to his house, he always passed Mrs. Steerforth's house. On this particular occasion, as he was passing that house, he was stopped by Mrs. Steerforth's maidservant who told him that Miss Rosa Dartle wanted to speak with him.

Miss Rosa Dartle was in the garden. She looked paler and thinner than before.It was not a cordial meeting. She asked if Emily had been found. She further stated that she had run away from Steerforth. She called Littimer. He told all the story in obedience to Rosa's order. Littimer and Steerforth had been abroad with Emily ever since they left Yarmouth. They went to France, Switzerland, Italy etc. Steerforth seemed to be infatuated by Emily for a good deal of time. She learnt speaking different langeages. She was praised wherever they went. After some time she became low-spirited. There were quarrels between the two. Steerforth left asking Littimer to inform Emily that he had gone. He suggested that she should marry a respectable man who could ignore her past. It meant that Emily should marry Littimer. Emily was unexpectedly disturbed and violent on hearing this news. She was almost mad. She might have killed Littimer. She was shut up, but she ran through the window and was not seen afterwards. On

hearing this Steerforth insulted Littimer. Miss Dartle had to pay Littimer to get the story from him. David asked if Emily had been allowed to receive letters from home. Littimer considered it unlikely. After Littimer's departure Rosa Dartle informed David that there was a very wide breach between Mrs. Steerforth and her son. As both of them were very obstinate and proud by nature, there seemed to be no immediate prospect of a reconciliation between them. As for Emily said Miss Dartle, "low girl" might be dead, and if she was alive, she might try to gain her object of getting married to Steerforth. Miss Dartle asked David to see to it that the girl never met Steerforth again.

At this point Mrs. Steerforth came into the room. She was greatly altered. She regretted that her son's sense of duty had not yet been restored. She also said that Emily would try once again to entrap her son, David replied that Emily was such a self-respecting girl that, under the changed circumstances, she would die a hundred deaths rather than accept a cup of water from Mrs. Steerforth's son. Mrs. Steerforth then talked about David's marriage and his success as a writer. She said that if David's mother had been alive, she would have felt proud of him. It was evident to David that she was thinking of her son who had brought only disgrace to her for having run away from home with a "low girl".

David went next evening into London to look for Mr. Peggotty. He found him in his little room over a chandler's shop in Hungerford Market. He told Mr. Peggotty that he had learnt about Emily. He also suggested if she returned to England, Martha might be able to get news of her. Both of them went out in search of Martha. They saw her near Blackfriar's Bridge.

Comments. Through Littimer Dickens gives an account of Emily's life with Steerforth after her elopement with him from Yarmouth. The chapter also throws light on several characters. Emily learnt different languages during the course of her travels all over Europe and "her merits really attracted general notice". After her "honeymoon" was over, she must have missed the loving care of Peggotty household which must have depressed her. Steerforth has proved himself to be a villain. He exploited Emily's desire to be a 'lady' and eloped with her on the promise of marriage. Most probably Steerforth deserted Emily because he had got tired of her. Having reduced her, and having lived with her as her lover for sufficent time, he did not need her any longer. His act of deserting Emily betrays his cruel and callous nature. His suggestion that she should marry a respectable person like Littimer shows how mean he is. Both Mrs. Steerforth and Miss Rosa Dartle are proud and callous women. Both are proud of their class and regard Emily as a "low woman", and wish her to be dead.

CHAPTER 47. MARTHA

Mr. Peggotty and David were searching for Martha. Suddenly, near Westminster Abbey, they notices a figure who seemed to be Martha. It was late in the evening, and quite dark. They could not, therefore, see her

distinctly. She was walking very fast. After having passed through several streets, she came to a halt on the bank of a river. She stood there, looking intently at the water below. David realised that she was about to commit suicide. Promptly he stepped forward, and, with the help of Mr. Peggotty, pulled her back from the edge of the water. She uttered a terrible scream. Martha began to sob that it would be best if she jumped into the river because her life was so miserable. Martha blamed herself for Emily's disappearance and was beside herself with grief because Emily had been so kind to her. David explained that she was not to blame from the water. She sobbed and cried. David asked her to help them in their search for Emily. They said they trusted her completely. She agreed to devote herself fervently to the task. David gave her his own and Mr. Peggotty's addresses. She, however, refused to accept any money.

David returned home after midnight. He was surprised to find the door of his aunt's cottage open. A man stood eating and drinking in the garden. David's aunt came out and gave him some money. He was unhappy with the little amount given him, but Miss Trotwood said that was all she could spare at the moment. When the man went away, David asked his aunt who he was. She replied that he was her husband. Once she loved him dearly. He had not only broken her fortune but also her heart. She left him after making a generous provision for him, but he wasted whatever he had. Soon afterwards he became a gambler and a cheat. And then he started visiting Miss Trotwood in order to blackmail her and get money out of her. As long as she could afford to give him money, she did so out of nostalgia for their past love, but now she had lost her patience as she had lost her money. Aunt Betsey asked David to keep the subject a secret.

Comments. Martha Endell, "the fallen woman", reappears in this chapter to play her part in the story. Dickens again resorts to **coincidence.** Martha goes to commit suicide just at a time when David and Mr. Peggotty are following her to seek her help in their search for Emily.

The end of the story has begun. Dickens seems to have started gathering various stands in the plot. In Chapter 45, the Doctor Strong—Annie sub-plot culminated in happy reunion of ostranged husband and wife. In Chapter 46, he picked up Steerforth-Emily episode which continues in Chapter 47. In the same Chapter the mystery of the stranger who has been a constant source of trouble to Aunt Betsey is also resolved. We also learn that even Aunt Betsey has a weakness. She admits that her husband is still alive and that it is he whom she has been giving considerable sums of money. She recalls the time when she loved him but he broke her fortune and nearly broke her heart.

CHAPTER 48. DOMESTIC

David had been working hard on the novel he was writing. Now the novel was published, and it became a success, surprisingly, he was not "stunned by the praise". He began to pursue his vocation of authorship with

greater diligence and self-confidence. He did, however, decide to give up the arduous task of reporting dreary debates.

David and Dora had been married for a year and a half, and they still had little luck with house keeping. They had employed a boy-servant who mostly quarrelled with the cook. He stole Dora's watch. When he was detected he confessed that he had cheated David in numerous ways. David Copperfield was ashamed of being such a victim.

David Copperfield talked to his child-wife about their faulty arrangement. She only wept and said he should never have married her. David decided to form Dora's mind so that she could become more responsible in household management. He began by reading Shakespeare to her and by giving out "little scraps of useful information, or sound opinion". After some time David realised that it was a vain pursuit. He, therefore, decided to be satisfied with his child-wife and she was happy once again. David decided to adopt himself to her. He decided to bear on his shoulders what he must. He thought of being as much happy as possible under the circumstances.

David hoped that their expected baby would change his "child-wife" into a woman but the baby died shorlty after birth and Dora's health began to deteriorate. The doctors assured David that soon Dora would recover her normal health, but that did not happen. She herself was very hopeful of recovering her normal strength, but the weakness persisted. David had now to carry her down stairs every morning, and upstairs every night. However, she remained perfectly cheerful. She had now become an invalid. Aunt Betsey proved very helpful in this situation by nursing her. Even Traddles tried his utmost to be of some use to them. One night Aunt Betsey bid goodnight to 'little Blossom", and David cried to think "....... oh what a fatal name it was, and how the blossom withered in its bloom upon the tree !"

Comments. David gives an account of his conjugal life and analyses reasons for the failure of his marriage. He also records his own reflections and feelings regarding his marriage. Although the chapter starts in a lighter vein with an account of their boy-servant who quarrelled with the cook and committed petty thefts, and David's efforts to improve the mind of his child-wife, it is mainly concerned with Dora's illness. Dora's death is clearly foreshadowed in this chapter by David's comparing Dora with a withering flower. The condition of Jip, the dog, is also indicative of Dora's impending death.

CHAPTER 49. I AM INVOLVED IN MYSTERY

One morning David Copperfield received a letter from Mr. Micawber stating that his peace of mind was shattered and his power of enjoyment was destroyed. He informed David that he would be at the south wall of the King's Bench Prison that evening at seven. Traddles had also received a letter from Mrs. Micawber requesting him to reason with her husband.

Mystery and secrecy were the chief characteristics of Mr. Micawber. He was often wild and violent.

Traddles and David Copperfield found Mr. Micawber waiting for them at the appointed spot. His manner of greeting was more confused and less gentle than of the past. He appeared low-spirited. When they mentioned Uriah Heep, Mr. Micawber said that he was sorry for anyone who knew such a man. David asked him how his old friends, Mr. Wickfield and his daughter Agnes, were getting on, Mr. Micawber replied that Agnes was the only bright spot in his miserable existence and that he had developed a great admiration and respect for that young lady. Finally, they boarded a coach and went to Aunt Betsey's house, where they could talk. Both Aunt Betsey and Mr. Dick welcomed Mr. Micawber. They asked Mr. Micawber to make some of his wonderful punch, but he was so upset that he forgot what he was doirg and ruined the drink. Mr. Micawber had by this time begun to feel so sad that, after a few minutes, he pulled out his handkerchief and burst into tears. David asked him what the matter was. Mr. Micawber burst out : "Villainy is the matter; baseness is the matter; deception, fraud, conspiracy are the matter; and the name of the whole atrocious mass is—HEEP !" Mr. Micawber called him a "detestable serpent" and vowed that he would crush the "hypocrite and perjurer". Mr. Micawber made some mention of the Wickfields, but before explaining what Heep had done to them, he rushed from the house. As he left, he mentioned a future meeting at which he planned to "expose intolerable ruffian—HEEP !" David later received a "pastoral note" from Mr. Micawber, asking them to be present at an inn in Canterbury one week from them for this purpose.

Comments. This chapter marks another development in the Micawber household. The tension under which Mr. Micawber seems to be working has adversely affected the cheerful temperament and caused a rift between Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Micawber. He is completely disillusioned with Uriah Heep and can no longer remain reticent on the subject. That is why he decides to expose the intolerable ruddian. He, however, heightens the suspense by fixing a meeting after a week.

CHAPTER 50. MR. PEGGOTTY'S DREAM COMES TRUE

Some months had passed since their interview with Martha on the bank of the river. Martha had been in constant touch with Mr. Peggotty. She had not achieved any success in her efforts to find Emily. The result was that David began to despair of ever meeting Emily again, and he began to believe that she was dead, However, Mr. Peggotty's conviction was unshaken. He still believed that she was safe and would return to him. During this period, Mr. Peggotty had been a frequent visitor at David's house, and both Dora and David admired the man for his abiding faith. Mr. Peggotty had been asked by Martha not to leave London.

One evening, David was walking about alone in the garden. It was the second day in Mr. Micawber's week of suspense. It had been raining all day

and there was a dampness in the air. Suddenly David saw a figure approaching him. It was Martha. She asked him to come with her as Mr. Peggotty was not at home. She had left a letter at Mr. Peggotty's residence. They drove to Golden Square. Martha took David hurriedly to a dark street where poor lodgings were let. While people were curiously looking at them, Martha took him to the top storey of one of the houses. They saw a woman pause at a door and enter. It was Rosa Dardle. Martha took David to a garret situated by the side of the room which Rosa had entered. The door between the two rooms was open—David could hear the conversation going on between Rosa snd Emily.

Rosa was full of merciless hatred. She poured cruel scorn of Emily. Emily requested Rosa to spare her. She told Rosa that she had been deceived by Steerforth, but that she trusted and loved him. Rosa Dartle warned Emily against making any fresh effort to meet Steerforth or to try to tap him once again. Emily spoke in a helpless tone, trying to assure Miss Dartle that she had no intention to meet that man. Emily appealed to Miss Dartle to space her, and to realise how miserable she was. Emily was in tears, but Miss Dartle refused to be moved by the tears, of a girl who had tried to entrap Steerforth. She commanded Emily to go as quickly as possible to her relations in Yarmouth and never show nerself to Steerforth. She blamed Emily for Steerforth's going away, as she hurled insults at the poor girl, but Miss Dartle continued her vindictive abuse. She threatened that if Emily stayed in London even for one more day. She would expose her and proclaim her story and her character to all the people there. David was now in almost incontrollable rage, and was tempted to interrupt the scene, but he decided to wait for Mr. Peggotty.

In the meanwhile David heard a footstep on the staircase. It was Mr. Peggotty. Rosa left the room and Mr. Peggotty rushed in. Emily cried out, "Uncle !" and fainted in Mr. Peggotty's arms.

Comments. Mr. Peggotty's dream at last comes true and Emily returns to London. Emily is still the innocent young girl who can only muster a weak defence when Miss Dartle humiliates her. Emily pleads for forgiveness and explains how much she has suffered because of her passion for Steerforth. Miss Dartle, on the other hand, betrays her callousness and meanness. Instead of feeling pity for the poor girl, her only concern is that Emily should not again meet Steerforth. This is a very poignant scene. Some critics, however, regard it a bit too melodramatic.

CHAPTER 51. THE BEGINNING OF A LONGER JOURNEY

Early next morning, Mr. Peggotty visited David and told him about Emily's escape from Littimer. Aunt Betsey was also present. Mr. Peggotty insisted that she should also listen to what he had to say. After escaping from Littimer's custody at night, she kept running along the seashore till she fell down with exhaustion. A fisherman's wife found her lying on the shore. She gave Emily shelter in her cottage. Emily was down with fever

for some time. When she recovered, the fisherwoman and her husband put her on board a small trader. She thus travelled to Leghorn and from here to France. She got into the service of some inn in France. One day she saw Littimer, so she fled to England. She came to London—where she met a woman whom she thought was a friend but who was really about to lead Emily into a life of prostitution. Before Emily could be harmed, Martha found her and "brought her safe out".

Mr. Peggotty wanted to emigrate to Australia with Emily. He wanted to start a new life there. They had to sail in six weeks' time. Mr. Peggotty wanted to return Steerforth's money to his mother. He had informed Ham of all that had taken place. Before leaving for Australia, Mr. Peggotty wanted to visit Yarmouth.

David Copperfield also accompanied Mr. Peggotty to Yarmouth. At Yarmouth, David visited Mr. Omer at his shop. The old tailor was paralysed and was in a wheelchair, but was in the best of spirits. He said that he had read David's book and told him how proud he was to have known him and his family.

Peggotty was living with Ham in his house and had let her own house. Mr. Peggotty brought Mrs. Gummidge from the boathouse. All of them spoke about the cheerful life which Mr. Peggotty was expecting in Australia. No one talked about Emily. Ham requested David Copperfield to write to Emily on his behalf. He wanted her to forgive him for having pressed his affections on her. He also wanted her to believe that he was not greatly hurt. He still loved her and pitied her lot.

Mrs. Gummidge did not want to be left behind. She begged Mr. Peggotty to take her to Australia even if she had to go there as a slave. Next day they returned to London accompanied by Mrs. Gummidge. She was satisfied because her proposal for emigration to Australia had been accepted by Mr. Peggotty.

Comments. This chapter contains a moving account of Emily's adventures after her escape from Littimer's custody. Mr. Peggotty decides to emigrate to Australia with Emily, his sale object being to save Emily from the disgrace which she would have to face in Yarmouth. The latent goodness of Mrs. Gummidge also comes to the surface in this chapter. She is so attached to Mr. Peggotty that she insists on accompanying him to Australia. Ham's goodness and self-denial are re-emphasised in the chapter.

CHAPTER 52. I ASSIST AT AN EXPLOSION

David and Mr. Dick prepared to leave for Canterbury for the mysterious meeting arranged by Mr. Micawber. Dora insisted that she could manage quite well until their return and that Miss Betsey should go with them. Tommy Traddles also accompanied them on the trip. They went to meet Mr. Micawber at a hotel. Mr. Micawber arrived at the hotel punctually. Mr. Micawber told them to call at the office of Wickfield and Heep and ask for Miss Wickfield.

The somewhat confused group proceeded to the office as directed and asked to sea Agnes Wickfield. They found Mr. Micawber at his desk, Mr. Micawber lèd them into Mr. Wickfield's former office and they met Uriah Heep who was surprised at their presence. Despite his usual nervous manner, Uriah attempted to play the gracious host. He said that now he did all the work relating to Mr. Wickfield's business as the latter was hardly fit to do any work. When Agnes joined them, Uriah Heep asked Mr. Micawber to withdraw from the room. Mr. Micawber, however, said that he had to say something to them all. He remarked that if there was a scoundrel on this earth, it was Uriah Heep. Uriah Heep as stunned to hear this remark. He warmed Mr. Micawber to think twice before he said anything in vein. He also urged Agnes not keep company with them if she wanted the safety of her father. At this point Traddles entered with Uriah Heep's mother. Uriah Heep asked who he was and what he wanted there. Traddles replied that he was the agent and friend of Mr. Wickfield and that he had got a power of attorney from Mr. Wickfield to act on his behalf in all matters. Uriah no longer pretended to be humble as he used to do in the past. He revealed his ill-will, malice and hatred.

Mr. Micawber read out a document denouncing wicked Uriah Heep in a verbose style. He described Uriah Heep as the most consummate villain that ever existed, a forger and a cheat. Uriah Heep made a dart at the document, as if to tear it into pieces. Mr. Micawber, with miraculous dexterity, hit him at the wrist with a ruler that he had ready for the purpose. Mr. Micawber then disclosed that Uriah Heep had been practising all kinds of fraud and manipulations. He confessed that he himself had assisted Uriah Heep in the various forgeries that Uriah had committed.

Mr. Micawber said he had fallen into Uriah Heep's power by borrowing money from him. Therefore, Uriah often used his services for falsification in business. Uriah was imposing on Mr. Wickfield. He was deceiving his master in every possible way. When Mr. Wickfield was unfit to do any business, Uriah went to him to get his signature. In this manner Uriah had drawn large sums of trust money. He thus made it appear that Mr. Wickfield was dishonest. In this way he got a hand over him and started torturing him mentally. Mr. Micawber knew that he would have to go to prison for his part in Uriah Heep's dishonest practices, but he had thought it better to go to prison than to continue as a collaborator of Uriah Heep in the latter's devilish schemes. Mr. Micawber furnished solid proof in support of the charges he laid on Uriah Heep. He had given the account books of the firm to Traddles. Uriah's mother asked him to come to terms but he told her to keep silent.

Miss Betsey Trotwood pounced upon Uriah Heep and demanded her property. She had placed her money for investment with the firm and it had been lost. Now when she realised that Uriah and not Mr. Wickfield was at fault, she wanted to recover it. Traddles told Uriah that all books and documents would remain in their possession. He would have to pay every

farthing that he had misappropriated. Traddles also compelled Uriah to give up the deed of partnership which he had by force, got signed by Mr. Wickfield. Uriah remained confined to his room. Before his departure he told David Copperfield how much he had always hated him.

Miss Betsey Trotwood and David went home with Mr. Micawber. Mr. Micawber, having unburdened his heart by his complete exposure of Uriah Heep's villainy, was now fully reconciled with his family. Again he was hopeful that "something will turn up", and he was thrilled when Miss Trotwood suggested that she could "loan" him the funds necessary for him and his family to accompany Mr. Peggotty to Australia. Mr. Micawber was certain that it would be just the thing and that "something of an extraordinary nature will turn up on that shore".

Comments. This is a highly dramatic chapter in which Uriah Heep's true character is exposed by Mr. Micawber. In sharp contrast to the fall of Uriah Heep, Mr. Micawber and Tommy Traddles rise to the height of their nobility. Mr. Micawber reveals a serious side by his efforts to collect evidence, and a nobleness of character by his willingness to accept poverty rather than continue to live in the deceitful web spun by Uriah Heep. He makes good use of his verbose and grandiloquent style in the composition of chargesheet against Uriah Heep. Traddles too plays a laudable role in this affair. David wonders why he did not recognise the true character and qualities of his former classmate before this.

CHAPTER 53. ANOTHER RETROSPECT

David noticed that Jip, Dora's dog, had become quite old and pathetically feeble, just like his mistress. Dora expressed a wish to see Agnes, so she came to stay with David and his wife. Dora told David one night that she was too young and silly to be fit to be a wife and that perhaps it might have been better if they had loved each other as a boy and girl, and forgotten it. She said it was better as it was. He might one day have got weary of his child-wife who was in no sense a real companion. David wept bitterly on hearing Dora speak in this strain. He took her in his arms. After this Dora expressed her desire to talk to Agnes alone. David sat downstairs with Jip while Agnes went upto Dora. Jip whined, lay down at David's feet and died after giving out a sad cry. Then Agnes came downstairs. From her face and the signs that she made David understood that his child-wife Dora too was dead.

Comments. This is an extremely pathetic and poignant chapter. Dora's death, though expected, comes as a big shock to David. Her suffering caused by prolonged illness arouses our sympathy. It must be admitted that despite her simple nature and inexperience, Dora's analysis of their inept marriage is correct. She reveals a deep understanding of David's feelings by inviting Agnes to be with her at the end.

CHAPTER 54. MR. MICAWBER'S TRANSACTIONS

David was extremely distressed over Dora's death, and Agnes

suggested that he should go abroad in order to forget his inhappiness, she made all the arrangements, but David had to wait until after "the final pulverisation of Heep" and until the emigrants had left.

All the matters arising from Mr. Micawher's disclosures were settled by Traddles who proved himself to be a most competent lawyer. The unigration of the Micawber family was to be financed by Miss Trotwood, who had regained her money. Traddles explained that he had gone over the Wickfield account and found that the business was not short of funds and that Miss Betsey's money would be returned, except for two thousand pounds that she had drawn some years before. Miss Betsey informed David that she had not told him about this money because she wanted to see if he could get along without her financial help. Miss Betsey also agreed to pay Mr. Micawber's I.O.U's. as they were due, and Mr. Micawber could repay her after he made good in Australia. She, however, wanted that Mr. Micawber should not be told at this stage that she had undertaken to discharge his liabilities. Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Micawber now made the necessary preparations for emigrating to Australia. As Mr. Peggotty was also going to that country with Emily and Mrs. Gummidge, it was arranged that they should form one group so that they could help one another in case of need.

Agnes had now decided to open a school so she could take care of her father now that his business had been liquidated. Traddles informed that Uriah had embezzled the money because of his hatred for David, and that Heep and his mother had gone to London, but that "if he could do us, or any of us, any injury or annoyance, no doubt he would".

Miss Trotwood was distressed by something all this time, but David did not know what it was. Finally, his aunt asked him to go for a ride in the morning, and she would tell him the reason. They drove to a London hospital where a coffin was waiting. Miss Betsey Trotwood told David that her husband had died the night before they had gone to Canterbury. He had sent for her in his last moments and was sorry for his misconduct. They drove to the Churchyard at Horsney where he was buried exactly thirty six years after the day of his marriage to David's aunt.

Comments. In this Traddles plays a major role in performing all the legal formalities and solving the tangles created by Uriah Heep. It is Traddles who renders invaluable service to Aunt Betsey by his probe into Heep dishonest activities.

Dickens has begun to tie up the various strands of his plots. Uriah Heep is disgraced and removed to London; the Micawbers and Mr. Peggotty are removed even farther, to Australia. Miss Betsey's fortune is saved and her husband buried. The minor characters are dispensed with so that David's life will again become the focus of attention.

CHAPTER 55. TEMPEST

The day, on which Mr. Peggotty, Mr. Micawber, and others were to

sail for Australia, was now approaching fast. Peggotty came to London to see off her brother, Emily and Mrs. Gummidge. David spent all his time with her, with Mr. Peggotty, and with the Micawbers, though he never saw Emily. He had sent a note to Emily containing Ham's message to her. In reply she wrote Back to him to thank him and Ham for their goodness and kindness. She also wrote that although Ham's words were like sharp thorns, those words were yet a source of comfort to her. David thought it his duty to go to Yarmouth in order to take that letter of farewell to Ham. On the way he noticed the strange appearance of the sky. A storm was blowing. They had to fight their way forward. Before they saw the sea, its spray was on their lips. David had never encountered such a powerful storm. He put up at the old inn. Then he struggled to the beach to have a look at the angry sea. Masses of water made a booming sound and struck the beach. David came to learn that Ham had gone to Lowestoft to repair a ship and would return next morning.

The wind rose further that night. It grew very dark. The storm became terrible. David could neither eat nor sleep. He got up several times during the night, but he could see nothing outside. At last he fell asleep and got up at about nine in the morning. The storm was still raging. Somebody was knocking at his door and shouting that a ship from Spain or Portugal was wrecked in the neighbourhood.

David dressed quickly and joined the crowd on the beach. One mast of the ship was broken off and it beat furiously against the side of the ship. Sailors were working to cut away this portion of the wreck. A young man with long curling hair was seen to be particularly active. There was a bell on board the ship. As the ship shook madly, the bell rang the knell of unbappy sailors involved in the tragedy. Sometimes they lost sight of the ship and sometimes they could see it. Two men were gone. The lifeboat manned by brave people could not render any help.

In the meantime Ham came out of the crowd. He seemed to be determined to go out to rescue the sailors. David tried to hold him back. Ham said if his time had come, even fate could not alter it. Men came running with ropes. Ham stood there with a rope in his hand and another round his body. Several men held the latter rode which he had left loose on the beach. The wreck was breaking up. The lonely man sticking to the most was waving his red cap. His action reminded David of an old and dear friend. Ham dashed into the sea after a great retiring wave. He was soon lost beneath the foam. They pulled him in. He was hurt but he took no heed of that. He gave further directions and went in again.

Ham had almost reached the wreck when a mountain-high wave of sea-water leaped into the ship and sank it. Ham was pulled out to David's very feet. He was insensible—dead. David's attention was soon drawn to another dead body that had come ashore. It was Steerforth. He lay with his head on his arm, as he used to at school.

Comments. This chapter forms the climax of the novel. It also

contains the most outlandish coincidence in the novel. It is strange that Steerforth should travel by the same ship which is wrecked in the neighbourhood of Yarmouth. Ham's innate goodness and spirit of self-sacrifice are evident in his effort to rescue the life of a man against all odds. It is ironical that Ham should try to save the life of the very man who had robbed him of his sweet heart. Of course, Ham does not know that the man is Steerforth. Whether he would have tried to save that man even if he had known his identity is a root point. But the chapter is most remarkable for the vivid and graphic description of the storm which overshadows everything else.

CHAPTER 56. THE NEW WOUND AND THE OLD

David realised that his feelings for his friend had never really changed. He had always loved and admired Steerforth no matter what he had done. David thought it his duty to inform Mrs. Steerforth of her son's tragic death and to return the body for burial. He went to Highgate and tactfully broke the news.

On hearing this news Rosa launched a vehement attack on Mrs. Steerforth like a mad woman. She remarked this would appease Mrs. Steerforth's pride. She accused her of corrupting her son. She claimed she loved Steerforth better than his mother. Had she been his wife, she would have been the slave of his whims even if she had got only a word of love from him in a year. When he felt fresh and true, he loved her and her alone. David requested Rosa Dartle to have pity on Mrs. Steerforth. The poor old lady lay moaning in grief. Rosa cursed David also saying that it was an evil hour when he came to the house. Then she took the impassive figure of Mrs. Steerforth in her arms and tried to awaken her dormant senses. David returned later in the day. Steerforth's body was placed in his mother's room.

Comments. In this chapter Miss Rosa Dartle makes a belated declaration of her love for Steerforth after his death. She had loved him since childhood. Although her love remained unrecognised and unrequited, she continues to worship Steerforth. Steerforth's neglect made her bitter and gloomy. Steerforth is finally punished by Nature for his crime. With Steerforth's death, his entire story is eventually resolved.

CHAPTER 57. THE EMIGRANTS

David decided to keep the news of the tragic death of Ham and Steerforth from Mr. Peggotty and Emily-before they sailed for Australia. For this purpose he took the help of Mr. Micawber who promised in his characteristic manner to keep newspaper reports from reaching the group before they sailed. David wanted Mr. Peggotty and Emily to depart "in happy ignorance" for their new life in Australia. The preparations of the Micawber family for the voyage to Australia had now been completed. David, his aunt, Agnes and Clara Peggotty went aboard to see them off.

David joyfully discoverd that Martha Endell would accompany the group to Australia. Mrs. Micawber rounded up her children and reiterated her promise never to desert Mr. Micawber. David saw Emily, but he did not think it proper to go and talk to her. The ship began to move and David waved goodbye to Emily and Mr. Peggotty standing arm-in-arm as the ship pulled away.

Comments. This chapter describes the departure of some of the close friends of David. The ship board scene is effectively portrayed. The chapter provides a comic relief from the sadness and pathos of the preceding chapters. There is an under current of comedy throughout the chapter. Mrs. Micawber continues to hold a high opinion of the talents of her husband and is firm in her resolution never to desert him. Her entire conduct on this occasion is very amusing. Their departure for Australia with a new hope ends the chapter on a happy note.

CHAPTER 58. ABSENCE

David went away from England in order to find some relief for his grief over the premature death of his wife. He did not fully realise how great the shock of that death was to his. His travels abroad did not afford much relief to him. In fact, the desolate feeling, with which he went abroad, became deeper. He lamented the death of his childwife, and he lamented the death of his friend Steerforth, and the death of his friend Ham. He roamed from country to country, from place to place, carrying his burden with him everywhere.

In the course of his wandering David came, one evening, into a valley. Here he felt deeply affected by the scenery around him. It was a valley in Switzerland, and the scenery of the mountains as profoundly impressive. All at once he felt that Nature was speaking to him. Nature seemed to be asking him to give an outlet to his grief by weeping. He wept and wept, as he had never wept before, over Dora's death. David had received a packet of letters from Agnes while he was in Switzerland. She told him that his sorrow must be his strength so that he could turn "affliction to good". David intensely returned to his writings and wrote a story the plot of which arose from his personal experiences. He sent it to Traddles who got it published on his hehalf David's fame continued to grow, and he finally began his third work of fiction. His mind began to clear and his health improved. He decided to return to England.

Now David began to be obsessed by thoughts of Agnes. She was ever present in his mind. She had always proved to be a source of consolation and inspiration to me. He realised that in his wayward boyhood he had thrown away the treasures of her love. He felt that he should have married Agnes instead of Dora. He made no effort to conceal that he loved her, that he was devoted to her, but he assured himself, that it was now too late. The time was past. He had let it go by, and had deservedly lost her. After travelling abroad for three years, David returned to England.

Comments. This chapter expresses David's sense of loss and desolation over Dora's death, over the deaths of Ham and Steerforth, and over the departure of his intimate friends from England. The chapter mainly contains the reflections and feelings of David. David is haunted by the thoughts of Agnes. He realises that in his wayward boyhood he had thrown away the treasures of her love. He still loves her, but feels that it is too late to marry her because of the brother-sister relationship that exists between them.

CHAPTER 59. RETURN

David landed in London on a cold autumn evening and he decided to surprise his friends who did not expect him until Christman. At Gray's Inn coffee-house, David asked a waiter about "Mr. Traddles'........reputation among the lawyers" but the waiter did not seem to know Tommy's name and David began to worry about his friend's position.

Eventually, David found Traddles' apartment at 2, Holborn Court, and discovered that he was now married to Sophy, whom he had courted so long. Traddles was happy to meet him and Sophy gave him a warm welcome. Sophy's five sisters were living with them, in their set of three rooms. but the family seemed to be happy. David was convinced that Traddles would succeed in his law practice. They spent a pleasant evening together.

David met, later that night, Mr. Chillip in a coffee room. He told David that he was living in the neighbourhood of Mr. Murdstone at Bury St. Edmunds. The then Mrs. Murdstone was a lively young woman, but her spirit had been broken since her marriage and she was almost mad.

David Copperfield went by coach to Dover next day. He found his aunt taking her tea. His aunt, Peggotty and Mr. Dick reveived him with open arms and tears of joy.

Comments. There is not much action in this chapter. David is told about happenings to various characters. Dickens continues to pick up various loose ends in the story and arrange them. The description of Traddles' household and the account of his marriage is very amusing.

CHAPTER 60. AGNES

David learnt from his aunt that the emigrants had been writing home cheerfully. Mr. Micawber had sent a number of small sums of money in repayment of his debts. Mr. Wickfield had grey hair but he was a reclaimed man. Agnes was as good and beautiful as ever. Miss Betsey Trotwood thought Agnes could have got married many times but did not do so because of some special attachment.

David Copperfield went to Canterbury the next day. He caught Agnes in his arms as soon as he saw her. He could not express his great love for her. She talked about her school and her quiet life with her father. When David asked about her "attachment", she became evasive, and David dropped the topic. At dinner, David met Mr. Wickfield. Mr. Wickfield

related the story of how he got married in opposition to the wishes of the father of the woman who became his wife. In fact, his father-in-law had renounced his daughter after she was married to him (Mr. Wickfield). But Mr. Wickfield's wife had not lived long and had died two weeks after the birth of Agnes. Mr. Wickfield praised Agnes and compared her affectionate and gentle heart to her mother's broken one.

Before leaving David was able to tell Agnes of his gratefulness to her for all her help. He promised her that he would keep her in his thoughts till his death. While riding back at night, David feared that Agnes was unhappy and he knew in his heart that he was too.

Comments. In this chapter the essential goodness, sympathy and motherly affection of Agnes have been underlined. She is the only person who has remained unchanged throughout the novel. The news of Agnes' special "attachment" arouse the feeling of jealousy in David's heart, showing his love for her.

CHAPTER 61. I AM SHOWN TWO INTERESTING PENITENTS

David had by now become quite famous as a novelist, and he could foresee a very bright and prosperous future for himself. He had now taken up his abode in her aunt's house at Dover, and he had resumed his work as an author with great zeal. Occasionally he went to London for a change or to consult his friend Traddles in connection with his business affairs. David received such a large volume of mail because of his writing that he dicided to have Traddles manage his correspondence from London. Traddles was full of praise for his wife Sophy. Indeed, he spoke eloquently about her management of the house, her domestic economy, and her cheerfulness.

One day David Copperfield went to London to meet Traddles. He had received an invitation from Mr. Creakle, his old schoolmaster. Mr. Creakle was now posted as a Middlesex magistrate. He had invited Copperfield to see the true system of prison discipline. In his opinion it was the only way of making lasting converts and penitents.

Traddles and David went on the appointed day to the prison under the charge of Mr. Creakle. He greeted them warmly. In the company of other visitors they started their tour of inspection. They found excellent food being prepared in the kitchen for the prisoners. The system needed 'high living'. They were told about two model prisoners number 27 and 28. Number 27 was full of pious admonitions and wrote beautiful letters to his mother. When they came to his cell, he was found reading his hymn book. The door was unlocked and number 27—Uriah Heep—walked out. He greeted the party. In answer to various questions he stated that he was very humble and that he had been more comfortable in the prison than he had ever been outside. He said he realised his follies then.

Number 28—Littimer—was then brought out. He was asked if he had any complaints to make. He answered that cocoa was then better made than when he had complained previously. He repented of his follies but was

troubled by the aims of his former companions. He said he hoped that a young gentleman, there present, might repent of the wickedness and sin to which he had been a party. He said he forgave a certain young lady for her behaviour towards him. He called her to repentance. He then went into his cell looking at Uriah Heep as if they were known to each other through some strange medium of communication.

David asked one of the warders of the prison about Number 27's last folly. He said it was fraud, forgery and conspiracy. He told him that Number 28 had got a place and robbed his young master of two hundred and fifty pounds. He was arrested due to some action taken by a dwarf. In fact, while he was eluding pursuit. Littimer had been recognised by Miss Mowcher. She ran between his legs, upset him and stuck to him till he was arrested. Both Uriah Heep and Littimer were under sentence of transportation.

David understood that both the hypocrites realised the market value of repentance and hoped it would help them soon after they were transported.

Comments. In this chapter there is not much development in the plot of the novel. Dickens takes a short break from the main story and exposes the inefficiency of the prison system of his time.

CHAPTER 62. A LIGHT SHINES ON MY WAY

David had seen Agnes a number of times during the two months of his arrival home. He knew that he loved her. One day, just before Christmas, he asked his aunt at she knew anything more about the attachment of Agnes's She said she felt sure Agnes was going to get married.

On arriving at Mr. Wickfield's house, David found Agnes all alone. He told her what a debt of gratitude he owed her. He asked her if she had a secret, and if she would take him into confidence about the secret. His intention was to find out if Agnes was really going to marry someone. Agnes was very reluctant to talk about her "attachment" and instead of answering his question, she burst into a flood of tears. She tried to get away from him on the plea that she was not feeling well. But he detained her and told her that he wanted to share her unhappiness. Agnes said that she certainly had a sectet, and that it was an old secret which she could not reveal. These words gave him a new hope. David put his arm around her waist, and hesitantly asked her if it was not possible for him to look upon her as something more than a sister. Her tears fell fast, but David saw his hope brighten in them. He told her that he had always loved her, and that he should heve married her in the first instance instead of marrying Dora. Agnes said, "I have loved you all my life". When they told Miss Betsey Trotwood of the engagement, she was immensely delighted. She almost went into hysterics.

David and Agnes were married within a fortnight. Miss Betsey Trotwood, Traddles, Sophy, Doctor Strong and Mrs. Strong were the only guests present at their wedding. After the wedding Agnes told David that the night Dora died, she told Agnes that only she should "occupy his vacant place".

Comments. At long, last, the long romance between Agnes and David finally matures in this chapter and they are finally united not to part again. For David it is a moment of self-discovery; he realised who it is that he really loves. At last he realises what the reader has hoped for all along.

CHAPTER 63. A VISITOR

David had advanced in fame and fortune. His domestic happiness was now perfect. David and Agnes bad been happily married for ten years.

One night they were sitting by the fire in their house in London and three of their children were playing in the room when David was told that a stranger wished to see him.

The stranger was only Mr. Peggotty who had come back to England for a month to see his friends. He told David that they had done well at farming and were then living at Port Middlebay Harbour. Although David had taken the precautions of not informing Mr. Peggotty about Ham's death, he had come to learn about it from a traveller who had got an old newspaper with him, containing an account of a shipwreck and the deaths of Ham and Steerforth. Emily still remained unmarried. Although there were many men who wanted to marry her, she had consistently refused. In fact Emily had altogether given up the idea of marriage.

Martha had got married to a young farm labourer. Even Mrs. Gummidge had an offer of marriage from a ship's cook. She had, however, declined the offer by hitting the cook over the head with a bucket. Mr. Micawber had become a magistrate and was diligent and esteemed correspondent of a newspaper. Mr. Peggotty then produced a newspaper named **Port Middlebay Times** in which was printed a letter written by Mr. Micawber and addressed to David. In this letter Mr. Micawber had congratulated David on the progress that he had made as an author. Mr. Micawber had informed that people in Australia had been reading David's books and had greatly admired them. The letter also contained some cheering news about David's old teacher of Salem House.

Mr. Peggotty stayed with them for about a month. Before he returned David took Mr. Peggotty to Yarmouth to show him the little tablet that he had put up in the memory of Ham in the churchyard. Mr. Peggotty gathered a tuft of grass and a little earth from Ham's grave to take it back to Emily.

Comments. In this anticlimactic chapter, Dickens picks up rest of the loose ends of the plot so that the web that he has spun may not have a "ravelled end". All the characters who emigrated to Australia worked hard and prospered there, ending the various subplots on a happy note.

CHAPTER 64. A LAST RETROSPECT

David looks back on his life and tells the reader about his old friends. He finds himself fortunate, having children and friends around him, besides Agnes. Aunt Betsey is older, but unchanged and is cared for by Peggotty. One of David's children is a daughter to whom his aunt has become a

godmother. Thus Aunt Betsey's original wish has now been fulfilled, though in a different way. Mr. Dick has grown old, but he has not lost his gest for making kites. He now takes David's sons with him to enjoy his kite flying. David sometimes meets Mrs. Steerforth. She is a bent old lady. She supports herself with a stick. Her feeble mind is often wandering. Rosa Dartle, who is dark and withered, sometimes loves her and sometimes quarrels with her. Julia Mills comes back from India. She is married to a growling old Scotsman. Doctor Strong, having a happy domestic life, is still labouring at his Dictionary. He has yet reached the letter D'. The old soldier is still living with him though she does not have the same influence as she had before.

Traddles is lucky. He has the chance of becoming a judge. Sophy's eldest sister known as 'the Beauty' still lives with them. She has a unfortunate marriage with a vagabond. Some other sisters of Sophy are also seen there most of the time.

The happiest of all is David. His love for Agnes is complete. "The dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company". His only wish is that she will continue to live with him and that when he dies, she will be near him, "pointing upward".

Comments. Dickens continues his winding up operation. He disposes of all the remaining characters. The story ends on a happy note and everything turns out well to the satisfaction of readers.

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11
MAJOR CHARACTERS IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

1. DAVID COPPERFIELD

TITLE CHARACTER

David Copperfield is the pivotal character in the novel. The novel is named after him and all the major events and episodes of the novel revolve round him or are connected with him in some way or the other. All other characters in the novel are presented through David's eyes. He is one of the most important characters portrayed by Dickens. He is an immortal literary figure.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTER

David Copperfield is an autobiographical character. He is a projection of Dickens' own personality. David resembles Dickens in many respects, but in many other respects the novelist has departed from reality. David's character is portrayed out of recollections and wishfulfilments by a novelist of extraordinary power of imagination. Thus Dicken's own sufferings as a child in his home and as a boy at Warren's Blacking Factory are reflected in David's account of his childhood and boyhood. David's success as an author reflects Dicken's own fame as a novelist. In fact, in this novel, Dickens seems to be reviewing his own life and career, and taking stock of himself emotionally and artistically. In the context, Philips Hobsbawn comments, "The young David is sharply individual, as earlier heroes of Dickens are not. He is as representative as oliver, but for more personalised; as oppressed as the children of Dotheboys Hall, but informed with the author's own feeling. He is at once an orchetypal waif upon the road and a projection of his author's own psyche. At last Dickens was able to inform social criticism with personal emotion; or, what comes to the same thing, he projected his personal emotion into a critique of society, and so erected realistic details into symbolic drama".

HIS CHILDHOOD

David Copperfield is a posthumous child, born six months after his father's death. He is brought up under the affectionate care of his mother Clara and his nurse Peggotty. The only other relative, Aunt Betsey, has never visited the house since his birth. His mother's marriage with Mr. Murdstone, a dark man with moustaches, whom David has never liked,

marks the beginning of his suffering. The boy naturally feels jealous because he feels that this cruel girl is trying to snatch his mother from him. Mr. Murdstone thinks the child is being spoiled by his mother, and so he takes up his education in his own hands. But he is tyrant; he beats the child and punishes him for no fault of his. David is intelligent, but he is afraid of Murdstone. Hence, whatever he learns is forgotten in Mr. Murdstone's dark presence. Mr. Murdstone in return accuses David of carelessness and beats him.

ILL-TREATMENT BY STEPFATHER

David has a deep hatred for Mr. Murdstone, his stepfather, because he is often beaten and ill-treated by him. Once, as he is being mercilessly caned, he bites his stepfather in order to get free from him. He is locked in a room for five days, at the end of which he is sent to another equally hateful and dismal place, Salem House, a boarding school run by a very cruel man. Mr. Creakle, the headmaster, is in the habit of beating the boys at the slightest pretext.

MISERABLE LIFE AT SALEM HOUSE

On his first day in the school, David is insulted, and a placard reading "Take care of him, he bites", is placed at his back, for the other boys to see and laugh at him. This is the punishment he gets for biting Mr. Murdstone. David wants to get away from the oppressive atmosphere of the school. The only redeeming feature is his friendship with two of his classmates—Steerforth and Traddles.

DRUDGERY AT MURDSTONE AND GRINBY'S

The sudden death of David's mother marks the next stage in his life. His cruel step-father Murdstone and his sister Miss Murdstone have no sympathy for him. David is taken out of school and sent out in the hostile world to work and earn his livelihood for six shillings a week at Murdstone and Grinby's. He is only a child of ten at this stage. The wretched life of drudgery has a very demoralising effect on the little boy. David expresses the agony of his soul in the following words :

> "........ it is matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf.
>
> No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship .... I mingled my tears with the water in which I was washing the bottles; and sobbed as if there were a flow in my breast, and it were in danger of bursting.

After some time, David decides to run away and go to his aunt Betsey

in Dove. But being honest by nature, he runs away on a Saturday night after completing his week's work for the wages paid in advance. It shows his pluck and courage to go through the unknown journey for six days, almost with an empty pocket and on an empty stomach. On hearing this pitiful story, she decides to adopt him. Thus David's sufferings comes to an end. He starts a new life under the name of Trotwood Copperfield, with Betsey and Dick as his new guardians.

HIS AMIABLE NATURE AND POPULARITY

David, as presented in the novel, is a slim boy, handsome in appearance with an open, frank and generous nature. That is why, he is liked by everybody and is able to form life-long friendships. At school, Steerforth and Traddles are devoted to him, and later on he endears himself to the Micawbers and the Peggotty household. His aunt Betsey Trotwood at once takes a fancy to him. He is liked and cared for by Agnes and Mr. Wickfield, and then by Dora. It is all due to his amiable nature and good heart that he endears himself to such a large number of characters in the novel.

HIS SENSITIVE NATURE

David has a highly sensitive nature. Even as a child he cannot bear the least insult or neglect, and suffers terribly as a consequence. He feels miserable on account of the ill-treatment of his stepfather Mr. Murdstone and his sister Miss Murdstone. While describing his childhood David says :

> .... I might have been improved for my whole life, I might have been made another creature perhaps, for life, by a kind word at that season. A word of encouragement and explanation, of pity for my childish ignorance, of welcome home, of reassurance to me that it *was* home, might have made me dutiful to him in my heart henceforth, instead of my hypocritical outside, and might have made me respect instead of hate him.

As a pupil at Salem House, he suffers at the hands of Mr. Creakle, the Headmaster, who takes pleasure at wielding his cane. David feels wretched because of the placard placed at his back. He also feels unhappy when Steerforth insults Mr. Mell for his poverty. David finds it impossible to describe his shame and wretchedness as he sinks to perform the object task of washing bottles at Murdstone and Grinby's at an age he should be studying in a school. Later he feels insulted and refuses to take back the letters that he has written to Dora.

SINCERE AND HELPFUL FRIEND

David is very sympathetic and helpful to others. He is a sincere and dependable friend. While living with the Micawbers, he helps them to sell their belongings in order to pay their debts. Even when they are in prison, David makes it a habit to visit them daily and help them in his own small

way. Similarly he remains attached to Peggotty and other members of Peggotty family throughout his life. He goes to Peggotty, his nurse, when he learns that Barkis, her husband, is seriously ill, and after his death, helps her to put her affairs in order. David shares Mr. Peggotty's grief after Emily's elopement with her lover. He shares Ham's grief on his being deserted by his fiancee. He continues to hold a high opinion of Steerforth despite the latter's shameful treatment of Emily. He remains true to Tommy Traddles. He feels a genuine affection for Dr. Strong and Mr. Dick.

GRATEFUL TO BENEFACTORS

David can never forget any kindness shown to him. He is grateful to Peggotty for the love and kindness she heaped on him when he most needed it. He grows fond of her and does whatever he can to help her. Similarly, David never forgets the favour which Miss Betsey does to him. She gives him shelter when he is most in need of it, and when there is no one in the world to help him. Not only does she give him shelter on his arrival at her cottage, but she takes full charge of him, getting admitted him to a school, and then choosing a profession for him. She spares no expenses to launch him upon a career. And David does not forget all this. At one stage, Aunt Betsey advises David never to be mean, vulgar or cruel. And he never forgets this advice. He deems it his duty to look after her and give her moral support when she loses her money. He tells her not to worry and starts looking for a job. David goes to Mr. Spenlow to get his articles cancelled so that he may return the one thousand pounds that his aunt had invested for the purpose. He then works hard, takes up the job of a secretary, learns shorthand, and in this way, does his best to become independent and support his aunt. David also remains ever grateful to Agnes for her affection and good advice on all occasions.

HIS AMBITION AND PERSEVERANCE

It is David's ambition to get education, grown into a cultured gentleman and become an author. He experiences inexpressible anguish when he has to take the drudgery of washing bottles. In order to realise his aim in life, he has to struggle very hard. He is endowed with the virtues of hard work and perseverance. Even as a child books have a great fascination. Disgusted with the abominable job of cleaning bottles, he runs away to his aunt Miss Trotwood who gets him admitted to Dr. Strong's school. He is "put into the lowest form of the school" but with his persistence, he soon makes up the loss and rises to become the headboy. Later he works hard as a proctor, struggling to make his life a success. He toils over shorthand till he becomes an expert in this line. He undertakes a part-time job with Dr. Strong when his aunt is financially ruined. It is a result of his perseverance that he becomes successful as a parliamentary reporter and later on as a novelist.

HIS HONESTY

David is honest, kind and conscientious. Never in his life does he take recourse to dishonesty or deceit even in the face of suffering. When, after his engagement with Dora, he realises that he has suddenly become very poor, he thinks it proper to prepare Dora for marrying a poor man. In the face of suffering, he remains undaunted. He always takes Agnes into confidence about his affairs. Even when dishonest he is moved with the best of motives. He hides the news of Ham's death from Mr. Peggotty and Emily as long as possible to save them pain.

HIS KEEN OBSERVATION

Another remarkable quality of David Copperfield is the sharpness of observation, both of scenes and persons. This characteristic is particularly evident in the description of his early life at Blunderstone and in London, Dover and Canterbury. He describes these places in such a graphic and vivid manner that we feel as if we have actually visited them. Similarly, he keenly observes the eccentricities and foibles of various characters that they come alive before us.

HIS ROMANTIC DISPOSITION

David Copperfield is endowed with an incorrigibly romantic disposition. As a child, he falls in love with little Emily at Yarmouth. As a boy, he falls in love with Miss Shepherd at Canterbury. He adores Miss Shepherd. In the Cathedral, he cannot look upon his book, for he must look upon Miss Shepherd. When the choristers chant, he hears Miss Shepherd. In the service he mentally inserts Miss Shepherd's name; he puts her in among the Royal Family. They meet at the dancing school and David has Miss Shepherd for his partner. He is thrilled at the touch of her glove. Once David Kisses Miss Shepherd in the cloak room and feels ecstatic. The affair comes to an end one day as Miss Shepherd shows preference for another boy and makes a face at David. At the age of seventeen, David is again in love; this time not with a little girl, but with the tall, dark, black-eyed, thirty year old, the eldest Miss Larkins. He regularly takes walks outside Mr. Larkin's house. Once he walks with the eldest Miss Larkins. He feels that he is swimming about in space, with a blue angel, in a state of blissful delirium. He even has a flower from her. But one day Agnes informs David that the eldest Miss Larkins is going to be married to Mr. Chestle, a hopgrower.

HIS LOVE FOR DORA

After finishing school, David is sent to Spenlow and Jorkin's in London, to be apprenticed to the proctor's profession. One day, Mr. Spenlow invites him to spend the weekend at his house. There David meets Mr. Spenlow's daughter Dora and falls headlong in love with her. Dora seems to him a sylph and a fairy. He calls her the empress of his heart. She

takes possession of him, body and soul. She fills his whole mind. Despite impediments created by Dora's father and his own economic difficulties, David succeeds in marrying and fulfilling his dream of leading a happy married life with her. David's love for Dora is not a young boy's fancy. It is deep and sincere. After his marriage, he discovers that Dora is childish, entirely irresponsible of taking care of her household. She cannot look after the accounts, or perform any other household-duties. Still he loves her. About a year and half after the marriage, Dora falls seriously ill and dies, During her long illness, David attends on her like a loving husband, and he feels very lonely and miserable after her death.

Dora's death darkens David's life. Following Agnes's advice, he goes on a tour of the continent.

HIS LOVE FOR AGENES

David has loved Agnes from the very beginning, but he has not been able to understand the true nature of his feeling. He has regarded Agnes merely as a sincere friend who has brought comfort and solace to him by her sympathy, timely advice and guidance. It is only on his return from Europe that he becomes conscious of the fact that he has always loved her. Then he proposes to her, and is readily accepted, for Agnes too has loved him all along. His conjugal life with Agnes is a happy one, and under the tender care and loving influence of Agnes, he forgets the cares and worries of his life, and the miseries he has undergone.

HIS OBTUSENESS

In spite of having a number of qualities, David betrays a lack of understanding. He is unworldly and sometimes fails to understand people, William, the waiter, easily takes an advantage of him. He has often met Steerforth and even visited his mother at his home. But he fails to realise that Steerforth is capable of great cruelty and meanness. Agnes loves him right from the beginning but he does not understand the nature of this love. It is also surprising that although he has been selling the books and furniture belonging to the Micawbers, he is so easily cheated by the donkey-cart man. After his marriage, David continues to be cheated by servants and merchants.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, David Copperfield is a gifted child. We admire him for the many qualities of head and heart—for his sensitiveness, his minute observation, his sympathetic and helpful nature, his honesty and integrity. He is also fond of reading right from his childhood. These qualities help him to become a great writer. A critic compares him to a looking glass : "One of the strangest things in this novel is the figure of the titular hero himself. David Copperfield is merely a sort of literary looking glass in which we view the other characters. And although David tells us a lot about

himself—how he wrote stories for the press, his attempts to enter law, his struggle with shorthand and reporting—few of these details seem real. The real interest is more firmly centred on the people who circulate around David's life, and it is what happens to them rather than to David that is of real importance. "Being an autobiographical portrait, David has all the charm of Dickens' personality. To conclude in the words of Somerset Maugham, "David is the hero drawn after Dickens' own heart—not as he himself was but as he would have wished himself to be, for *David Copperfield* is a fantastication, sometimes gay, sometimes pathetic, composed out of recollections and wish-fulfilments by a man of lively imagination and warm feelings."

2. MR. MICAWBER

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Micawber is one of the most unforgettable characters in *David Copperfield*. Perhaps he is the most famous character of Dickens. He is as immortal as Falstaff or Don Quixote. According to a critic, Wilkins Micawber is "the supreme example of Dickens' power to make us sympathise with a character whom we might well avoid in real life". In the whole range of English fiction he is the greatest comic character. Perhaps he can stand second only to Shakespeare's Falstaff.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When David is employed with Murdstone and Grinby's it is with Mr. Micawber that he takes up his lodgings. David gives a beautiful description of his person after his first meeting with him : "I went in and found a stoutish middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes; with no more hair on his head (which was a large one and very shinning) than there is upon an egg, and with a very extensive face which he turned full upon me. His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of stick, with a large pair of rusty tassels to it, and a quizzing-glass hung outside his coat—for ornament, I afterwards found, as he seldom looked throught it, and couldn't see anything when he did".

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TOUCH

Charles Dickens is himself reported to have admitted that he drew Mr. Micawber after his own father. And there are indeed quite a few similarities between the two, Somerset Maugham remarks in this respect, "Mr. Micawber, with his plump figure, imposing shirt collar and tasselled walking stick, was drawn by the author from the financially slipshod and irresponsible side of his own father's character. John Dickens was grandiloquent in speech and shifty in money matters, but he was no fool and far from incompetent; he was also industrious, kindly and affectionate.

From these memories of his own father, Dickens created the greatest comic character in English literature after Shakespeare's falstaff, whom Mr. Micawber resembles in so many ways".

HIS MERCURIAL TEMPERAMENT

The first characteristic that we notice about Mr. Micawber is his mercurial temperament. Mr. Micawber has a large family to support, because of which he is always in debt. He agrees to take David as a lodger with him mainly in the hope that it would partially relieve the financial burden on him. During the first few days of his stay with him, the only visitors that David hears of are creditors. They come at all hours and some of them are quite ferocious. Being unable to repay those debts, he feels deeply distressed whenever creditors come to his house to ask for the repayment of the money which he owes to them. On such occasions he feels so miserable that he begins to make motions at himself with a razor as if he were going to kill himself. But, within half an hour of the creditors going away, he polishes his shoes with extraordinary pains, and goes out, merrily humming a tune, and looking the very picture of gaiety. It is nothing unusual for him to sob and weep at his pecuniary difficulties, and soon afterwards, to sing a joyous song. He often comes home to supper with a flood of tears, saying that nothing is now left for him but the prison; and yet he goes to bed in a merry mood, calculating the amount of money that he would spend on some decoration in the house. Unable to repay his debts he actually lands in prison; and, when David Copperfield goes to meet him there, he expresses the hope that, in case something turns up, he would be in a position to lead a very happy life. These alternating moods of joy and distress are really very amusing. On one occasion, David receives a letter from him, saying that he is unable to pay his bill at the inn in Canterbury where he has been staying with his wife, and that he would surely be sent to prison once again. This letter has been written by Mr. Micawber in a mood of great despondency. On receiving this letter David immediately rushes to the inn to comfort his friend, but on the way he meets the London-coach with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber sitting on it, Mr. Micawber looking the very picture of tranquil enjoyment, smiling at his wife's conversation, and merrily eating walnuts out of a paper bag.

A GREAT OPTIMIST

Despite his insurmountable pecuniary difficulties, Mr. Micawber continues to be a great optimist. His fits of depression last but a moment. He has a wonderful capacity to remain cheerful. A.C. Ward aptly remarks, "Mr. Micawber is the type of a whole race of men who will not vanish from the face of the earth so long as the hope which lives eternal in the human breast is only temporarily suspended by the laws of debtors and creditors and is always capable of revival with the aid of a bowl of milkpunch. A kindlier and a merrier, a more humorous and a more genuine character was

never conceived than this". He is one of those optimistic parson who are always waiting for something to turn up, and who are able to maintain their cheerfulness and good spirits, despite poverty, debt and imprisonment.

A GREAT COMIC CHARACTER

Mr. Micawber is the greatest comic creation of Dickens. There are some aspects of his personality that contribute to this comic effect. As has been pointed out earlier, he has quite a comic appearance. We cannot help laughing at the ease with which he can jump from deepest despair to supreme joy in no time. He makes motions at himself when a creditor threatens and abuses him. But the moment the creditor departs, he goes out cheerfully humming a merry tune with an air of greater abandon than ever before. The comicality of his character is further heightened by his wife, always with a twin at her breast, and, always determined never to desert Mr. Micawber. His sense of humour comes to his rescue even in most trying circumstances. He never loses hope and cheerfulness and radiates joy and happiness all around. He carries with him a perpetual sunshine and all those who come in contact with him, bask in it. G. K. Chesterton justly comments, "If Falstaff is the greatest comic character in literature, Mr. Micawber is the best but one".

HELPFUL AND SYMPATHETIC

Notwithstanding his financial difficulties, Mr. Micawber is a sympathetic and helpful person. He is always willing to help others. In his first meeting with David at Murdstone and Grinby's, he offers to come again and take David to his residence, for he knows that David has not been long in London and might forget his way. Even though he himself is in great financial difficulties, he tries to make David's stay with the family comfortable in every possible way. While shifting to prison, he takes care to make the best possible alternative arrangement for him. It is the company of Mr. Micawber, and that of his family, which makes David bear his wretched life in London.

HONEST

Mr. Micawber is an essentially honest person and he retains his innate honesty, despite grinding poverty and crushing weight of debt. Though he lives on debt and borrows money whenever he can—he borrows even from David—he tries his best to repay his creditors. He can never think of cheating anyone. In fact, he is surely grieved at his inability to repay it. When he discovers that Uriah Heep has cheated Betsey Trotwood by forgiving the signatures of Mr. Wickfield on certain documents, he unearths his wicked schemes. He could have made much profit for himself by joining hands with Uriah Heep. No thought of personal aggrandisement ever crosses his mind. On the other hand, he exposes the plot and comes to the aid of Miss Betsey Trotwood. Mr. Micawber acts most nobly and brings

comfort not only to Miss Trotwood, but also to Agnes and her father.

GRANDILOQUENT

Mr. Micawber speaks always in a grandiloquent and rhetorical manner. His command of the language is amazing; and he makes use of inflated vocabulary as far as possible. His talk is interspersed with telling figures of speech and vivid imagery. Time and again in the course of the novel, we feel greatly amused by Mr. Micawber's bombastic and verbose style of speaking and writing. Sometimes his rhetoric breaks down, and then he winds up a speech, "in short". On one occasion, on being asked by David how Mrs. Micawber is getting on, Mr. Micawber makes the following reply : "She is tolerably convalescent. The twins no longer derive their sustenance from nature's founts; in short, they are weaned". Speaking to Uriah Heep about David Copperfield's intellect, Mr. Micawber says; "It is a rich soil teeming with latent vegetation—in short, it is an intellect capable of getting up the classics to any extent". In the course of the same conversation, Mr. Micawber says that he has for some years been "contending against the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, that sometimes he has risen superior to his difficulties, and sometimes his difficulties have floored him". Later Mr. Micawber goes on to tell David that, "Mrs. Micawber is in a state of health which renders it not wholly improbable that an addition may be ultimately made to those pledges of affection which—in short, to the infantine group". This is Mr. Micawber's circumlocutory manner of saying that Mrs. Micawber has become pregnant and would be giving birth to another child. A conspicuous example of Mr. Micawber's style of speaking and writing is the letter which he writes to David Copperfield in connection with his discovery of the villainy of Uriah Heep, and the consequent frustration of all his own hopes of a bright future. In this letter he writes that his peace has been shattered, that his power of enjoying life has been destroyed, and that his heart is no longer in the right place. He further writes : "The canker is in the flower. The cup is bitter to the brim. The worm is at his work and will soon dispose of his victim". Here is Mr. Micawber's imagination at work, enabling him to make use of metaphorical language. In fact, the whole of this letter is written in Mr. Micawbers characteristic style which is highly figurative and grandiloquent. But this letter is surpassed by the charge-sheet which Mr. Micawber reads out against Uriah Heep to a gathering of his friends. This charge-sheet is a masterpiece of English composition. Says Mr. Micawber : "In appearing before you to denounce probably the most consummate villain that has ever existed, I ask no consideration for myself. The victim, from my cradle, of pecuniary liabilities to which I have been unable to respond, I have ever been the sport and toy of debasing circumstances. Ignominy, want, despair, and madness have, collectively or separately, been the attendants of my career".

A MAN OF CONTRADICTIONS

Mr. Micawber is a man of contradicions. He is constantly pursued by creditors, and yet he unashamedly asks for fresh loans from anyone who comes his way. On one occasion, David visits Mr. Micawber in jail Mr. Micawber weeps and advises David never to borrow money, and immediately afterwards borrows a shilling from him. Once while parting from David, Mr. Micawber says : "My advice is, never do tomorrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time. Collar him". This advice comes from a man who is himself always guilty of delays. In continuation of the advice, Mr. Micawber says that, if a man spends more than his income, the result is misery : "The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the god of day goes down upon the dreary scene, and in short, you are for ever floored. As I am". The contradiction between Mr. Micawber's profession and practice is very amusing.

HIS INTELLIGENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS

In the end, Mr. Micawber's hopes of something turning up are realised and he establishes himself as a successful magistrate in Australia. This sudden and unexpected conversion of Mr. Micawber has exposed Micawber to the fury of critics. They feel that this success is inconsistent with the earlier impracticable nature of Mr. Micawber. They regard this as an example of Dickens' method of "disposing of" his characters happily Mr. Micawber, they say, is a nuispance and Dickens condemns him to exile. There is no denying the fact the Mr. Micawber's ultimate success does look a little improbable. Still Dickens tries to give it a semblance of credibility. That he has the necessary intelligence and resourcefulness is clearly shown by the clever way in which he handles the Uriah Heep affair. He goes through the documents and collects all the relevant evidence under the very nose of Heep without arousing any suspicion. While exposing the evil machinations of Uriah Heep, Mr. Micawber does not allow him snatch the documents from his hands and frustrates his evil designs. He reads out the charges one by one, substantiating everything with full proof. This shows he has studied law and is capable of making good use of it. Therefore his success in Australia should not cause much surprise.

A LOVABLE CHARACTER

Despite his flaws and lapses, Mr. Micawber is indeed a very lovable character. We may condemn him for his easy-going, lazy disposition, but we cannot help loving him all the same. To quote A. O. J. Cockshut, "To read of Dr. Micawber is, as Chesterton said, like receiving a blow in the face. It is a deeply-felt experience, but it is not susceptible of analytic description. It follows that any detailed critical discussion of *David Copperfield* will tend to be unbalanced because it is impossible to give appropriate space to Micawber". According to Somerset Maugham, Mr. Micawber was "grandiloquent in speech and shifty in money matters,

but he was no fool and far from incompetent; he is industrious, kindly and affectionate".

CONCLUSION

Mr. Micawber is one of the immortals of English literature. According to Mr. G.K. Chesterton, "Mr. Micawber is a man who cannot be made to understand the tyranny of time or the limit of human hope". And further, "Micawber interrupts practical life but what is practical life that it should venture to interrupt Micawber ? It cannot be too much repeated that the whole lesson of Dickens is here. It is better to know Micawber than not to know the inner worries that arise out of knowing Micawber. It is better to have bad debt and a good friend".

According to Compton-Rickett, "Mr. Micawber is another type of the attractive mercurial temperament, ready to look on the bright side of things at the smallest provocation. Apart from this, the needy, improvident man would have served the stern moralist's purposes almost as well as Swiveller. But really we are scarcely conscious of his faults, so delighted are we by his company. This, it may be said, is due to the author making unfair use of his gift of humour, and idealising the man out of all human probability. That he idealises may be admitted".

3. URIAH HEEP

INTRODUCTION

Uriah Heep, Mr. Wickfield's 'humble' clerk, is the villain in *David Copperfield*. He is the iago of Dickens. He is an embodiment of hypocrisy, cunning and fraud. Mr. Micawber says, "If there is a scoundrel on this earth .... that scoundrel's name is —HEEP". He is hypocritically humble and is all the time plotting to ruin others. He is a 'heep' of roguery and villainy. We begin to hate this abominable rogue from the time he is introduced to us.

HIS APPEARANCE

David first meets Uriah Heep at Mr. Wickfield's house. After his first meeting, David gives a beautiful description of Heep, "I saw a cadaverous face at a small window .... The low orchard door then occasioned and the face came out. It was quite as cadaverous as it had looked in the window, though in the grain of it there was that tinge of red which is sometimes to be observed in the skins of redhaired people. It belonged to a red haired person—a youth of fifteen as I take it now, but looking much older—whose hair was cropped as close as the closest stubble, who had hardly any eyebrows, and no eyelashes, and eyes of a red brown, so unsheltered and unshaded that I remember wondering how he went to sleep". The characterisation of Uriah Heep is a good example of Dickens' mastery of the grotesque. Very considerable use is made of physical peculiarities to

suggest animal-like characteristics of Uriah's mind.

HIS HYPOCRISY

Uriah Heep is the very incarnation of hypocrisy. He pretends to be a very humble person. He tells David, "I am well aware that I am the 'umblest person going, let the other be where he may. My mother is likewise a very humble person. We live in an umble abode, Master Copperfield, but have much to be thankful for". On another occasion, he says, "Master Copperfield ! Father and me was both brought up at a foundation school for boys .... They taught us a deal of' umbleness; we was to be umble to this person, and' umble to that; and to pull our caps here and to make bows there; and always to know our place and abase ourselves before our betters.' 'Be umble Uriah', says father to me, 'and you'll get on'." But all his humility is a pretext for covering his cunning and deceitfulness. He professes to be humble but he wants wealth and rank. W. Eastwood remarks : "Uriah Heep's leading characteristic is hypocrisy, his inordinate ambition, ravening egoism and rancour against society being cloaked under a constantly reiterated profession of 'umbleness'. In the account of the origin of Heep's preoccupation with humility his own and his parents' education in charity schools and the use of it as a laver by which to improve his fortunes, as in the description of the working of the same characteristic in Heep's final appearance in gaol, Dickens shows himself aware of conditions in the institutions of his day which tended directly to produce this type of mentality. But that alone would not have been sufficient to produce a monster of Heep's calibre, which can be fully accounted for only by assuming an innate wickedness and malignity of mind".

HIS CUNNING AND CROOKEDNESS

Uriah Heep is a crooked and cunning man who betrays an utter want of scruple in promoting his prospects in life. He very cunningly and deceitfully tries to learn from David the secrets of Mr. Wickfield's business and private life. It is for this purpose that he invites David to his home, where he and his mother worm out information from him in a very cunning way. Then he studies law till late hours. Not that he wants to become a lawyer, but because he wants to master the legal intricacies and technicalities, so as to use them in his plot against Wickfield. He proceeds very cunningly to enmesh Mr. Wickfield. He forges Mr. Wickfield's signatures on certain important documents with the result that the poor man is soon under his thumb. Uriah Heep blackmails Mr. Wickfield and forces him to make him a partner in the firm. Uriah then employs Mr. Micawber as a clerk under him. He pays Mr. Micawber very poorly, but would gladly lend him money in order to get his cooperation in his conspiracy against Mr. Wickfield. Knowing Mr. Wickfield's weakness for wine and his complete trust of and dependence on him, Heep takes over the entire business of Mr. Wickfield in

his own hands. Later Uriah commits more forgeries. He compels Mr. Wickfield into using Miss Betsey's money for meeting business commitments which either do not exist or have already been provided for. He succeeds in convincing Mr. Wickfield that he is trying to save him from imminent degradation, while in fact he is himself pocketing all the money. He is also drawing up documents as if signed by Mr. Wickfield and attested by Mr. Micawber, forging the signatures of both himself. That is how he draws up a deed in the name of Mr. Wickfield, relinquishing his share the partnership and leaving the business entirely in the hands of Heep. He also draws a bill of sale on all his household-furniture, in return for which Heep is to pay him an annuity, thus making Mr. Wickfield financially dependent on Heep. The whole plot shows how crooked, cruel and unscrupulous Heep is.

UNMERITED AMBITION

Another prominent trait of Uriah Heep's personality is his inordinate and unmerited ambition. His ambitions are much beyond his merit. He aspires to wealth, high social status and love, though he deserves none of these. He is not well educated, nor can his personality command respect. Yet he has the audacity to think the one day he will be able to marry Agnes. There is nothing in him to win the love of a girl like Agnes. He, therefore, uses evil means to realise his ambition. Through wicked and villainous means, he becomes Mr. Wickfield's partner in business, gains power over him and intends to use this power in marrying Agnes.

HIS MISCHIVIOUSNESS

Uriah Heep's innate wickedness shows itself when he plays a mischivious role in the domestic life of Dr. Strong and his wife Annie. He creates a suspicion in Dr. Strong's mind that Annie is having an adulterous relationship with Jack Maldon. On this occasion David feels so annoyed with Uriah Heep for thus behaving that he hits that man, giving him a severe blow which necessitates Uriah Heep's having to get one of his teeth pulled out by a dentist.

A SOURCE OF MISERY AND SUFFERING

Uriah Heep is a source of misery and suffering to so many people. He is the source of all the miseries to his master Wickfield and his daughter, Agnes. Agnes suffers a great deal of internal trouble because of Uriah's evil designs upon her. She knows fully well that he is devil incarnate, yet she is helpless. He becomes a rival to David and creates obstacles in his marriage with Agnes. He takes out by fraudulent means all the money of Miss Betsey Trotwood. Consequently, not only Betsey but also David have to undergo a great deal of economic difficulties and troubles. David has to give up his plans of studying law and has to work as a secretary on account of Miss Betsey's loss of money. When this calamity takes place, David is engaged

to Dora and hopes to marry her very soon. But his poverty becomes a hindrance. Though Dora continues to love him, her father Mr. Spenlow tells him not to visit his daughter any more. All this suffering is caused to David on account of Uriah Heep's villainy. Thus Uriah Heep is a black-hearted villain.

MR. MICAWBER'S EXPOSURE OF HEEP'S WICKEDNESS

It is, however, left to Mr. Micawber to expose Uriah Heep's villainy and wickedness. It is Mr. Micawber who sums up the character of this man, and who brings a regular charge-sheet against him. He describes Uriah Heep as he most consummate villain, as a forger and a cheat, as a "heap" of infamy, as an avaricious, false, and grasping man. According to Mr. Micawber, this devil of a man has been manipulating Mr. Wickfield's accounts to his advantage and to the detriment of Mr. Wickfield Mr. Micawber thus reveals the full magnitude of Uriah Heep's evil.

HIS PUNISHMENT

But God's ways are sure and just. Heep's villainy at last recoils upon his own head. The work of retribution begins and soon Nemesis is at work and Uriah Heep is caught in the very trap he has prepared with such ingenuity. Mr. Micawber's eclipsed ability at last puts him in his true colour. Uriah Heep is caught in his own mess and pays the penalty he just deserves. He is convicted of fraud, forgery and conspiracy in a bank case and is sentenced to transportation for life.

CONCLUSION

According to A.O. Cookshut, "Uriah Heep is a puzzling and unsatisfactory character. There is a certain psychological insight in the original conception of him. He is a man deliberately trading on the moral confusions of others, Inability to distinguish between Christian humility and the social subservience of the lower orders was, we know, a common Victorian failing and one which can be traced back to the origins of the serious English novel to Richard-son's *Pamela.* It is credible that a clever rogue starting with every social handicap as a charity boy should quickly detect this blind spot in the society around him, and trade on it. But his repellent physical nature is unfairly over-stressed, and treated as if it were a moral failing. His damp, sweaty palm is not merely like so many physical details in Dickens, exaggerated : it is presented as exactly what we should expect of such an ill-bred fellow. Physical repulsion, moral disapproval and class-superiority are mingled, are boiled up together into a kind of broth where they become indistinguishable. And the indignation David feels about Uriah's wish to marry Agnes cannot possibly be put down to respect for her virtues. Uriah is called "a red-headed animal" so as to exploit the cheap horror of a possible sexual violation of the pure maiden. Here, in the midst of reading an important work of a very great novelist, we are

astonished to find ourselves in the world of *Murder in the Cathedral*—but worse, because Dickens lacks the redeeming naivety of such a work".

And to quote Baker, "Dickens has been blamed in this case for unsoundness and forcing the note. But, except that he makes capital out of the man's rascality, using him as the agent of Mr. Wickfield's ruin, to be followed by that gentleman's complete restoration, there is surely no inconsistency of drawing in either Uriah or his mother".

4. BETSEY TROTWOOD

INTRODUCTION

Miss Betsey Trotwood is one of the most unforgettable characters of Dickens. Indeed, she ranks among the immortal creations of Dickens, Like Mr. Micawber, she is an eccentric character. She is one of the most vividly and powerfully drawn characters in the novels of Dickens. She reinforces the impression that Dickens is at his best in portraying persons who have some oddity and eccentricity in their character.

HER APPEARANCE

Miss Betsey Trotwood is one of the great aunt of David Copperfield, the hero of the novel. We meet Miss Betsey in the very opening chapter. She is here described as a "formidable personage". When David goes to meet her at Dover, he is told that she is pretty stiff in the back. Later he describes her in the following words : My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no-means ill-looking. There was inflexibility in her face, in her gait and carriage, but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere".

THE FAILURE OF HER MARRIAGE

In her youth, Miss Betsey Trotwood had married a man younger than herself who had ill-treated her. He used to beat her and even threatened to throw her out of the window. Miss Betsey being a strong-minded woman found it difficult to get along with him. Soon she got legal separation by mutual consent on grounds of temperamental incompatibility. Miss Betsey gave him certain amount of money as compensation. Her husband went to India where he was reported to have died in ten years' time. Miss Betsey took her maiden name again, purchased a cottage on the sea-coast at Dover and settled down as a single woman.

HER ECCENTRIC NATURE

Suffering and disappointment in her married life have resulted in making Miss Betsey Trotwood odd and eccentric. Her manners are strange and ridiculous. Sometimes she quarrels with everybody for no apparent cause. She has great affection for David's father but she quarrels with him for marrying Clara whom she regards as nothing more than "a wax doll",

even though she has never seen her. She leaves Blunderstone and does not visit their home in the lifetime of her nephew. She comes to their home on the night of David's birth. She hopes that Clara Copperfield would give birth to a baby girl whom she would name Betsey, after her own name, and whom she would adopt as her daughter. She is shocked and disappointed at the birth of a male child (David) and abruptly leaves the house for good. After this Clara does not hear of her any more. The whole account of Miss Betsey's visit to Blunder-stone and of her reaction to the birth of a male child shows her eccentric nature. The oddness in her nature is revealed in other ways also. She expresses her strong disapproval of the name "Peggotty". She hits Dr. Chillip with the strings of her bonnet for informing her about the birth of a male child. Her way of dealing with the donkey-boys of her locality is very eccentric. Moreover, she has some peculiar and queer notions about London.

A WOMAN OF STRONG CONVICTIONS

Miss Betsey Trotwood is a woman of independent nature and strong convictions. She has no regard for public opinion. She drives her carriage herself right through the streets of Canterbury in open defiance of public opinion. If she does not like a person, she has the courage to tell him blandly and fearlessly. She is quite blunt in her speech to Uriah Heep. She hates his hypocrisy, meanness and hypocrisy. When Heep's treachery is exposed, she rushes at him to inflict physical punishment to him.

KIND AND GENEROUS

Despite her eccentric nature, Miss Betsey Trotwood is a kind and generous lady. Her suffering has not made her cruel or hard-hearted. She knows what suffering is, and is ever ready to help the sufferer and the needy. Disgusted with the drudgery at Murdstone and Grinby's, David resolves to seek shelter with her. He reaches Dover in such a shabby and dishevelled condition that Miss Betsey takes him for a beggar. She, however, is moved to pity after he relates his tale of woe. The way she tends him and administers all kinds of restoratives reveals the essential kindness of her heart. She decides to adopt him and renames him David Trotwood Copperfield. She tries to give him the best possible education at a decent academy run by Dr. Strong. She makes arrangement of his stay with Mr. Wickfield, her friend and legal adviser. After David's education is over, she provides him with sufficient money to enable him to visit Peggotty, see about himself and gain some valuable experience. Later she pays a heavy sum of one thousand pounds to get him articled with Spenlow and Jorkins, a firm of proctors in Doctors' commons. Her kindness are sympathy are not confined to David. Later she helps Mr. Micawber and his family to emigrate to Australia.

HER FORTITUDE AND DETERMINATION

Miss Betsey Trotwood is a lady of great courage and determination. She can single-handedly brave all the odds of life. She shows a rare fortitude when she is financially ruined. She does not lose heart as utter poverty stares her in the face. Rather, she tries to make the best of a bad situation. She quickly adjusts herself to the changed circumstance and is able to face the crisis with courage. Even in such adversity she does not allow David to get his articles cancelled so that some money may be retrieved. She begins to live with David in London, and is able to pull through adverse circumstances with fortitude and determination. Her advice to David speaks well of her charactr : "What I want you to be Trot, I don't mean physically, but morally ..... is, a firm fellow. A fine firm fellow, with a will of your own. With resolution, with determination, with character, Trot. With strength of character that is not to be influenced except on good reason, by anybody, or by anything. That's what what I want you to be". On another occasion, she tells him, "Never be mean in anything, never be false, never be cruel"

HER SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

Miss Betsey Trotwood is full of sympathy and understanding in her dealings with young people. When David falls in love with Dora, Miss Betsey tells him to make sure that he loves her sincerely and is not merely infatuated with her physical beauty. On being convinced of his love, she helps him to win her love. After Mr. Spenlow's death, she advises David to approach Dora with the permission of her aunts. After their marriage she helps Dora in her household affairs. In the initial stages, Dora is rather overawed by her stern figure but soon her fears are dispelled and a very pleasant relationship develops between the two. Whenever there are quarrels between David and Dora, she advises David to be patient and helps them to get reconciled. David's marriage with Agnes is a matter of real joy for her. In the beginning Miss Betsey does not like Peggotty's pagan-sounding name, but after meeting her she takes kindly to her and becomes friendly with her. She, however, prefers to call her Mrs. Barkis.

HER OPINION OF MR. DICK

Miss Betsey Trotwood has a distant relative living with her in her seaside cottage. The name of this relative is Richard Babley (Mr. Dick). This man seems to be half-mad. Miss Betsey herself tells David that people think Mr. Dick to be a very crazy fellow. She, however, regards Mr. Dick to be a very wise and sagacious man. In fact, she always consults him in almost every matter that needs consideration. She even consults him as to what she should do with regard to David Copperfield who has come to seek her shelter. Mr. Dick justifies Miss Betsey's faith in him when he helps to resolve the crisis in Dr. Strong's married life. Miss Betsey Trotwood's affectionate treatment of Mr. Dick shows the way in which the mentally

retarded should be treated.

A COMIC FIGURE

Miss Betsey Trotwood appears to be a comic figure in certain respects. We feel great amused by her brusque and dictatorial manner. We are greatly delighted by her unwavering faith in Mr. Dick who is doubtlessly mentally retarded. Miss Betsey is firmly of the opinion that he would one day rise to greatness in some way or the other. We are also amused by her horror of the donkeys treading upon the patch of green grass in front of her cottage. Every time she sees donkeys treading upon that patch, she calls her maid servant Jaret to go and thrash the boys leading the donkeys. She even scolds Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone for having ridden across that patch of ground. Her conviction that Clara Copperfield would give birth to a female baby and she (Betsey) would adopt that girl also amuses us.

CONCLUSION

Thus, although Miss Betsey Trotwood appears to be eccentric and unreasonable in the beginning, she is, in fact, most helpful and sympathetic. Betrayal at the hands of her husband makes her eccentric; David's love restores her to normalcy. She must have been a fine lady before geting ill-treated by her husband. There is a rare grandeur and magnanimity about her character.

5. AGNES WICKFIELD

INTRODUCTION

Agnes Wickfield, Mr. Wickfield's daughter and David's "good angel", is Dickens' concept of ideal womanhood. Modest and self-effacing, she is serenely beautiful and possesses great strength of character. She is a devoted daughter, a faithful and sincere friend and ultimately turns out to be a loving wife.

HER CALM AND SERENE LOOKS

David first meets Agnes when he goes to Canterbury for his education. He is to study at Dr. Strong's academy, but no accommodation being available with Dr. Strong, it is arranged that he will stay with Mr. Wickfield and Agnes, David finds the same placid and Tranquil expression in Agnes' face which he has seen in her mother's portrait. He says, "It seemed to my imagination as if the portrait had grown womanly, and the original remained a child". Her face has a serenity, a brightness, a sweetness which impresses David during his first meeting with her, and which lingers in his memory ever afterwards. David says, "I cannot call to mind when or where in my childhood I had seen a stained glass window in a Church. Nor do I recollect its subject. But I know that, when I saw her turn round in the grave light of the old staircase, and wait for us above, I thought of that window,

and I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterwards".

DEVOTION TO HER FATHER

Agnes is an affectionate and devoted dauthter. Ever since the death of her mother she has acted as the housekeeper of her father. Mr Wickfield once says that his daughter has the one motive of his life. But actually it is the other way round : to keep her father happy is the one motive of Agnes' life. She is deeply devoted to her father and takes affectionate care of him. She is ever solicitous about his welfare. Mr. Wickfield takes to excessive drinking after his wife's death. Agnes keeps a close watch on him lest should over-drink and harm his health. It is for this reason that she herself pours out his wine, and sits with her as long as he is drinking. In this way, she exercises control over his drinking. She is aware of Uriah Heep's cunning and so she does not leave him alone with him father. Once when Mr. Wickfield has to go to London on some business, Agnes decides to accompany him so that Heep may not cheat him. She tries her best to protect her father from Heep's clutches.

HER SELF-SACRIFICING NATURE

The greatest quality of Agnes' character is her self-sacrificing nature. No thought of her own self ever crosses her mind. She knows how to efface herself for the good of others. She always thinks of the welfare of others. After the death of her father, there is no one left to look after her father. So she leaves school and dedicates herself to looking after him. She cheerfully accepts her lot, and educates herself at home by perseverance and self-study. She does not care for the enjoyments and pleasures life, but does her duty with a smiling face. She knows that the ultimate aim of Uriah Heep's life is to marry her, and as result she experiences acute mental anguish. But she never speaks of her own suffering. Rather she is solicitous about the welfare of her father and David.

LOVE FOR DAVID

Agnes' self-effacing nature is further evident in her love for David. It appears that she is in love with him right from the beginning, but David is ignorant of her love. When Agnes comes to learn that David has fallen in love with Dora, she suppresses her love under the guise of sisterly affection. She advises and guides David, and is happy when he is married. She frequently visits them and helps Dora in house-keeping. She takes care of Dora in her illness. Dora is a little scared of her in the beginning, but Agnes soon wins her confidence, so that just before her death Dora requests her to take her place in David's life. But knowing fully well that it will not be very easy for David to forget Dora, she keeps Dora's last wish a secret from David. She advises him to seek comfort in nature. She even suggests that he should go on a trip abroad so that the change of place might ease his heart

and divert him. It is only when David returns from his foreign tour and proposes to her that she confides the secret to him. Agnes' silent and self-sacrificing love is rightly rewarded in the end.

A GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER

Having undergone much suffering, Agnes develops a reflective, discerning mind. She is a good judge of character. She is even able to judge the character of those with whom she does not come in contact. She rightly perceives Steerforth's vicious side. She, therefore, advises David to avoid that man's company. As a result of her advice David develops a lurking fear of Steerforth, and is suspicious of him. At first we are surprised at Agnes' advice, but she is proved right when Steerforth elopes with Emily.

DAVID'S GOOD ANGEL

Throughout the novel, Agnes acts as a friend, philosopher and guide to David. In fact, she proves most helpful to David on all occasions by giving him sound advice. After the death of her father Dora has shifted to Putney and has begun to live under the supervision of her two aunts. David is at his wits' end as to what he should do. It is Agnes who advises him to write a letter to the two guardians of Dora, asking for their permission to visit Dora in the capacity of a suitor. So helpful and sympathetic is Agnes to David that he begins to regard her as his guardian angel; and he tells her so. Recalling her sympathy for him at all times, David says that she was always a source of inspiration to him. He describes his feelings in the following words : "She filled my heart with such good resolutions, strengthened my weakness so, by her example, that all the little good I have done, and all the harm I have avoided, I solemnly believe I may refer to her". Thus, Agnes exercises a profound and wholesome influence upon David's life.

LACK OF DYNAMISM

Agnes certainly deserves admiration in view of her devotion to her father, her constant solicitude about her father's welfare, her beneficial influence upon David, and her self-effacing and self-sacrificing nature. David always refers to her as his sister. While Agnes possesses all these admirable qualities, she betrays a lack of dynamism. In fact, she is as ineffective as Dora in the practical affairs of her life. She can do nothing at all when she finds Uriah Heep acquiring a holdover her father's mind and treating him almost as an instrument. She unnecessarily suppresses her love for David and reveals Dora's last wish only when David proposes to her.

CONCLUSION

Agnes is an ideal woman. Tender, gentle, helpful and self-sacrificing, she is the grardian angel both of her father and David. According to an eminent critic, "Her calm presence is like a golden background against

which the other characters are shown up, and from which they seem to receive a kind of reflected light". But sometimes one wonders whether there can really exist a woman like Agnes. She seems to be more a dream figure than a flesh-and, blood creature. In fact, Agnes represents Dickens' ideal of womanhood.

6. DORA SPENLOW

HER PHYSICAL CHARMS

Dora, the daughter of Mr. Spenlow and David's first wife, is a woman of rare physical charms. David first meets Dora when Mr. Spenlow invites him to spend a day with them at Norwood. Dora has been educated in Paris and has just returned from there. She is fonding French ballads to the accompaniment of guitar. David describes her thus : "She had the most delightful little voice; the gayest little laugh; the pleasantest and most fascinating little ways that ever led a lost youth into hopeless slavery. She was rather diminutive altogether—so much the more precious I thought". David is bewitched by her extraordinary beauty and the moment he see her, he finds himself "swallowed up immediately in an abyss of love". After meeting her he is "lost in blissful delirium". As soon as he sets eyes on her he is conscious of nothing else and hears no voice except her own. As he himself puts it, he "dined of Dora" and returns six plates untouched during dinner.

SPOILT CHILD

Unfortunately Dora lost her mother in her childhood. As a consequence, she missed the controlling and correcting influence exercised by a mother. Since Mr. Spenlow, her father, is quite affluent, she gets accustomed to a life of luxury. Mr. Spenlow dotes on her and readily yields to her whims and fancies. She is surrounded by a number of servants and is never required to do any household work. Excessive love spoilts Dora as a result of which she wants to have her way in everything.

A SHALLOW GIRL

David's passion for Dora is intense indeed; and he is over head and ears in love with her. But we are not much impressed by her in anyway, Physically she may heve been an exceptionally beautiful girl but she is sadly deficient in intelligence and in the power of thinking. Indeed, she seems to be a most shallow-minded girl, nor does she have any independence of mind or action. She responds whole-heartedly to David's love, but she dares not disclose this fact to her father. She is a passive and submissive kind of girl; and she is almost servile to her father. She obtains a promise from David that he would keep his love affair with her a secret from her father. Had Mr. Spenlow not died, Dora would have obeyed her father to have nothing to do with David.

HER CHILDISH NATURE

Dora has acquired much outward polish and refinement in France and in England, but basically she remains a more grown-up child. She is a mere wax-doll, a butterfly, incapable of any serious thinking. She is blissfully iagnorant of sordid realities of life. She does not know what poverty and suffering are. On being told of David's financial ruin, she looks at him blankly and thinks that he must be joking. The suggestion that perseverance and strength of character would enable them to endure their poverty, makes her feel that she has no strength at all. Then turning to Jip, her dog, she asks the animal if she has any strength in her. She asks David to kiss her dog and then to speak to her in a pleasant manner. David has no choice but to kiss the dog. She is more fond of her dog than of any human being; and she is perpetually fondling and caressing the dog. Dora regards it as nonsensical on David's part to get up at five o' clock every morning. David pleads that he has work to do, but Dora wonders why she should work at all. On being asked how he and she would live without doing some work, Dora replies that they would live somehow. This kind of talk shows how ignorant of the world she is.

HER FAILURE AS HOUSEWIFE

Dora proves a very bad housewife. She does not know how to manage the home, or to keep accounts, or to perform any household duties. Her inefficiency as a housewife and her incapacity to do any household work destroy David's peace of mind and cause frequent friction between the two. David tries to reason with Dora but she accuses him of treating her cruelly. Dora thinks that David is finding fault with her because he does not love her as much as she does. She asks why he had married her if he was going to find fault with her and to ill-treat her. All the efforts of David to guide Dora, to teach her accounts and housekeeping prove futile, David undergoes acute mental agony by the failure of their marriage. He soon realises that she is ignorant of the realities of life and is quite incapable of learning them; and if he wants to be happy, he must accept her as she is. He finds it useless to attempt to train her according to his wishes. So he accepts it as it is.

Dora is herself conscious of the fact that she is no better than a child. She is fond of sitting beside her husband, holding the pen he might use to write with and taking pleasure in handing it to him when he needs one. During her prolonged illness she feels sorry to realise that she has been a useless wife to David, who is so tender-hearted as a husband. She has a great admiration for Agnes who is an excellent housekeeper.

HER LOVE FOR JIP

Dora has a great love for her dog Jip and Jip too loves her immensely. He always keeps near her during her illness. On the day of her death, he is kept downstairs while Dora is lying in a room upstairs. He wants to go up

in order to be near her bedside but is not allowed to do so. This makes him very restive and he cries in agony and pain. Finally he dies almost at the same time as Dora.

CONCLUSION

There is an ethereal quality about Dora. She does not seem to be a creature of this earth. She is so delicate, so fragile, so sweet that she does not seem to be fit for this crude earth. But one could as well say that this earth does not seem to be a fit enough abode for her. An eminent critic writes about her : 'Dora herself is one of the great triumphs of characterisation in the novel. This foolish, pretty girl, with her childish ways, fills David's heart with adoration for her. Few writers have more successfully recreated the shimmering enchantment of youthful love than Dickens does in these scenes : David so lost in infatuation with Dora that dining at her father's table, he does not know if he eats anything, or what he eats; David lost in luminous dreams of the delight of being allowed to call her Dora, or of having reason to believe that when she is among other people she still thinks of him; David filled with adoration even for her little dog Jip and with awe for her father simply because he is her father—all these touches are vibrant and effective".

7. CLARA PEGGOTTY

INTRODUCTION

Clara Peggotty, the maid-servant in the Copperfield house-hold, is David's early nurse and his life-long friend, Peggotty gives David the motherly affection which he fails to get from his own mother. The relationship that exists between Peggotty and David is so sweet that it revives one's faith in the innate goodness of human nature. She is one of the most dearly loved and respected characters in the novel.

HER APPEARANCE

David gives a beautiful description of Peggotty early in the novel (chapter II) : "....... and Peggotty, with so shape at all, and eyes so dark that they seemed to darken their whole neighbourhood in her face, and cheeks and arms so hard and red that I wondered the birds didn't peck her in preference to apples .... I thought her in a different style from my mother, certainly; but of another school of beauty, I considered her a perfect example". Peggotty is quite plump in the body and whenever she exerts a little after being dressed, some of the buttons on the back of her dress fly off.

HER OPPOSITION TO MRS. COPPERFIELD'S SECOND MARRIAGE

Peggotty is not only a servant but also a friend to Mrs. Copperfield. She is very unhappy at the prospect of Mrs. Copperfield marrying

Mr. Murdstone. She feels that this marriage is not going to bring any happiness to her mistress. She also seems to be conscious of its adverse effect on the child. There is a prolonged argument between Peggotty and Mrs. Copperfield over the issue during the course of which both of them cry. Since Peggotty has no means of forestalling this marriage, she takes David away with her to Yarmouth for a change. They return after the marriage has been solemnised, at the right moment she tells the child that he has got a new father. Thus she makes every possible effort to protect David's sensitive mind from any unpleasant impression.

HER LOVE FOR DAVID

Peggotty has a deep love for David. She pours on him all the pent-up maternal love of her heart. Her love for David borders on obsession. She tries her best to keep David away from the hazards of the troubled world which is so cruel to him. As pointed out earlier, on the occasion of Mrs. Copperfiels's marriage to Mr. Murdstone, Peggotty takes David away with her to Yarmouth to protect him from any adverse impression. After his mother's marriage to Mr. Murdstone, David grows sullen and morose because of the ill-treatment meted out to him. It is only Peggotty who tries to sustain his spirits. Once, as a result of David's having bitten Mr. Murdstone, he is put into solitary confinement in his room for five days and nodody is allowed to see him. But Peggotty talks to him through the keyhole and tries to console him. She even kisses the keyhole in order to kiss him. Finally David is put into the carrier's cart to be taken to a boarding school. As the cart moves a little, Peggotty emerges from behind a bush, rushes to David and embraces him. She stuffs his pockets with cakes which she has herself baked. She also gives him a purse containing some money. After her marriage Peggotty reserves a room in her home for David so that he may come and stay with her whenever he is free. She is ever ready to help David. Sick of his life in London, David writes to Peggotty for Miss Betsey Trotwood's address and half a guinea. Peggotty immediately replies and encloses half a guinea with the letter. She proves extremely helpful to him after he marries Dora. She cleans the house and makes other necessary preparations. During Dora illness she visits them frequently, the relationship that exists between Peggotty and David is so sweat that it is difficult to give it a name.

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

Peggotty is a faithful servant, full of duty and love for the family she serves. She is a dedicated soul. To her nothing is more important than serving her master's family in as many ways as possible. She is ever ready to make any sacrifice to keep David and his mother happy. She knows that Barkis is very eager to marry her. But she declines the offer firmly because she thinks that by marrying at this stage she will not be able to serve the Copperfield family. It is only after her mistress's death, when she is

dismissed by the Murdstones that she ultimately decides to get married. And she takes David's consent before marrying Barkis. Later Peggotty faithfully serves Miss Betsey Trotwood as househkeeper. There was a time when she dreaded Miss Trotwood but now a fine understanding develops between the two and they appreciate each other.

AS A WIFE

After her marriage to Barkis, Peggotty enjoys her short and belated married life. She proves a good wife to Barkis. To Barkis, she is the paragon of virtue, the perfect wife. He regards her as the most useful woman in the world, Peggotty looks after her husband with great care and tenderness during his prolonged illness.

CONCLUSION

In short, sincerity is the keynote of Peggotty's character. She is not only sincere to David and members of his family, she is equally true and helpful to her brother Mr. Peggotty, Ham, Emily and Mrs. Gummidge. She even tries to be helpful to David's friend Traddles. Her selfless nature endears her not only to all the characters in the novel but even the readers.

8. JAMES STEERFORTH

HEAD BOY AT SALEM HOUSE

James Steerforth is the Head boy at Salem House where David is sent as a punishment for having bitten Mr. Murdstone. Steerforth is good looking and at least half a dozen years senior to David. He is reputed to be a good scholar. When the boys return after holidays, David, the new boy, is taken before Steerforth as if he were a magistrate. Steerforth feels favourably inclined towards David from the very outset. As David readily surrenders to him whatever money he has got, Steerforth promises always to protect David at the school against other boys. With this money, Steerforth entertains other boys on his behalf. Thereafter Steerforth continues to act as David's protector. In fact, David begins to look up to him as his idol and hero because of the protection he offers him.

HIS PRIVILEGED POSITION

Steerforth enjoys a privileged position at Salem House because he comes of an aristocratic and rich family. He is a favourite of Mr. Creakle who shows a special consideration for him. For certain reasons her enjoys freedom from punishment. All the boys go to church on Sundays. Steerforth walks ahead of others in the company of Miss Creakle, Mr. Creakle's daughter, who is very pretty and who is supposed to be in love with him. Steerforth grows even more friendly with David as the latter undertakes to tell him every night the stories from the books which he read in his home at

Blunderstone.

It is on account of his privileged position at school that Steerforth has the audacity to insult Mr. Mell, his school teacher, before all the students in the class. When Mr. Mell protests against Steerforth's impudence, Steerforth further humiliates him by calling him a beggar. Soon afterwards Mr. Creakle comes and asks why Steerforth has called Mr. Mell a beggar Steerforth replies that Mr. Mell's mother is a pauper living on charity in a London alms-house. Instead of taking action against Steerforth, Mr. Creakle dismisses David repents having told Steerforth about Mr. Mell's mother.

HIS OUTWARD CHARM

Steerforth is a young man of great personal charm. He has very easy and engaging manners. He has the flexibility to adapt himself to any society he is in. He can be friendly, kind and amiable if he chooses. He knows how to get on with all kinds of people. He is also cheerful and courageous. All his charms, however, are superficial. At heart, he is selfish, unscruplous and callous. He gives delight wherever he goes but leaves disaster behind him.

HIS SEDUCTION OF EMILY

Once Steerforth accompanies David to Yarmouth where he is welcomed by Mr. Peggotty and Ham. Steerforth had previously met them when they had visited David at Salem House. At Yarmouth he is attracted by the beauty of Emily about whom he has heard so much from David. Emily is a sweet and innocent girl who wants to become a lady. Steerforth buys a boat and after having it rennovated, renames it 'Little Emily'. He puts the boat in Mr. Peggotty's charge, saying that he would come sometimes to enjoy boating upon the sea in his boat. During his subsequent visits to Yarmouth he keeps meeting Emily. Emily is engaged to be married to Ham but she falls into Steerforth's trap. Steerforth seduces her and prevails upon her to elope with him. He, however, has no intention of marrying her. Steerforth takes Emily to several European countries and, having lived with her at various place, he deserts her. He leaves for her a message that she should marry a 'respectable' man like Littimer. Emily feels deeply wounded and humiliated at Steerforth's maltreatment of her. Subsequently, Emily wonders from pillar to post till she is reunited with her uncle who takes her to Australia. She decides never to trust a man and to remain unmarried. Steerforth is responsible for having ruined a young and innocent girl's life. Steerforth can never be forgiven for his cruel and callous treatment of Emily.

DISRESPECT FOR OTHERS' FEELINGS

Steerforth is an irresponsible young man who has been spoilt by an affluent and dotting mother. He cares little for the sentiments of other people. He uses other people for his own selfish, heartless and unscrupulous

ends. At school, he used David's money for his own enjoyment and exploits the young boy by making him narrate stories while the poor boy feels sleepy. He insults Mr. Mell simply because he is poor and gets him dismissed. Miss Rosa Dartle has been passionately in love with Steerforth but instead of respecting her feelings he rather feels proud of having injured her and leaving a permanent sear on her mouth. He is responsible for the tragedy of Rosa Dartle. He breaks his mother's heart by means of his affair with Emily. He takes Peggotty family and causes untold misery to them. Beneath his veneer of politeness, he regards the Peggottys with a subdued sneer—"the natives in their aboriginal condition". He causes incalculable havoc in the life of an innocent girl, Emily.

CONSCIOUS OF HIS OWN DEFECTS

On rare occasions, Steerforth is shown as conscious of his own defects. But this knowledge does not check him—he seems rather to regard it as a justification, for he blames not himself but his parents' upbringing of him for what he is : "David, I wish to God I had a judicious father these last twenty years !" He further says, "It would be better to be this poor Peggotty .... than to be myself, twenty times riches and twenty times wiser, and be the torment to myself that I have been". His last words addressed to David also reveal his consciousness of his own defects : "Daisy, if anything should ever separate us, you must think of me at my best, old boy, come! let us make that bargain. Think of me at my best, if circumstances should ever part us !".

HIS DEATH

Steerforth's death is a befitting culmination to the kind of life he leads. While returning from abroad by sea after an absence from England for a few years, he meets a premature death as his ship gets wrecked in a tempest near Yarmouth. It is ironical that Ham whom Steerforth has wronged and whose happiness he has destroyed, gets drowned in an attempt to save Steerfoth.

CONCLUSION

Thus we see that Steerforth is a villain. There is only a difference of degree between him and Uriah Heep who is a villain of a different kind. Steerforth is as repulsive as Uriah Heep. Both are solely concerned with the satisfaction of their own ego, and are quite heartless with regard to the consequence of this on others. We do not feel sorry at Steerforth's tragic end.

9. TOMMY TRADDLES

THE MERRIEST AND MOST MISERABLE

Tommy Traddles is one of the most lovable characters in the novel. He is one of the pupils at Salem House where David is sent as a punishment

for having bitten Mr. Murdstone. Traddles and Steerforth are two boys with whom David develops lasting friendships there. Traddles, alongwith Steerfoth, saves David the embarrassment of wearing the placard *"Take care of him. He bites"*. David gives a beautiful description of Traddles : "Poor Traddles. In a tight skyblue suit that made his arms and legs like German sansages or roly poly puddings, he was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys. He was always being caned and was always going to write to his uncle about it and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while, he would cheer up somehow and begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate, before his eyes were dry". Once Traddles happens to hit a ball which breaks a window and then falls upon Mr. Creakle's head. This is something for which Traddles cannot be forgiven, and so he gets his punishment, as on other occasions and for other reasons.

HONOURABLE AND SYMPATHETIC

Traddles is a very honourable boy who never betrays anyone. He firmly believes that it is the duty of every boy to standby others and he religiously follows this principle. He often takes the blame of others on himself, On one occasion, it is Steerforth who laughs in the parish but the beadle thinks it is Traddles and Traddles is punished but he quietly receives the punishment. Traddles is also sympathetic by nature. He is aggrieved to see the poor Mr. Mell being dismissed just because his mother is a poor woman and lives on charity. He feels so miserable that he bursts into weeping whereupon he is caned by Mr. Creakle. Later Traddles tells Steerforth that the latter has wronged Mr. Mell by his disclosure about the destitution of Mr. Mell's mother. Steerforth regards Traddles as sentimental and feels that he should be called "Miss Traddles" and not "Mr. Traddles". David is deeply impressed by his sincerity and feels sorry to lose his company when he has to leave Salem House.

HIS STRUGGLE IN LIFE

Years later, David is pleasantly surprised to meet Tommy Traddles at a party at Mr. Waterbrook's house. Traddles is at this time living as a tenant with the Micawbers in a street near the Veterinary College, at Camden Town. David learns that Traddles is leading a hard life. Traddles has retained his simplicity of character and his good temper but bad luck still clings to him. He is fighting his way onwards against all the odds of life. He is now working as a proctor and at the same time studying for the bar. Mr. Micawber takes advantage of Traddles' simplicity of character. He has often borrowed money from people with Traddles as his surity. On certain occasions it has become necessary for Traddles to part with some of his household articles in order to pay Mr. Micawber's debts for which he stood surity.

HIS LOVE FOR SOPHY

Traddles is deeply in love with a girl named Sophy and wants to

marry her. Sophy is one of the ten daughters in a family that can hardly be described as rich. Her mother is a sort of invalid, and it has fallen to her lot to look after the entire household. Sophy is somewhat older than Traddles who describes her as "the dearest girl in the whole world". There is some opposition from Sophy's mother to the idea of Sophy's getting married because the smooth conduct of household affairs depends mainly on Sophy. Indeed, Sophy is indispensable to her mother and to the other members of family. Although Traddles cannot yet afford to marry, he hopes that things will improve. Traddles and Sophy decide to marry after they have saved enough money to buy their household requirements. They make a humble beginning by collecting a table and a flower vase.

A SINCERE FRIEND

Traddles proves a very sincere friend to David. He helps David in every way he can. He sympathises with him during Dora's illness and tries to go on little errands for their sake. He helps David in the episode concerning Emily's elopement. It is Traddles who advises David to learn shorthand as a consequence of which David becomes an expert newspaper reporter of parliamentary debates and is able to earn a little extra money. It is, again, Traddles who arranges a part-time job for Mr. Dick so that Mr. Dick may be able to help Miss Betsey Trotwood who has been financially ruined. Thus Traddles proves very helpful to both David and Mr. Dick. Traddles also renders signal service to Mr. Wickfield and Miss Betsey Trotwood by probing Mr. Wickfield's accounts which have been manipulated by Uriah Heep. In this matter, Traddles shows remarkable intelligence and industry. The result of his painstaking scrutiny is that Mr. Wickfield is saved from bankruptcy and Miss Betsey Trotwood's investments are redeemed. On this occasion David describes Traddles as his most affectionate and devoted friend. Once Traddles is invited to dinner at David's place. Dora being inexperienced, Traddles discovers that the oysters are not opened and the mutton is not well cooked. He looks on mutton but eats bacon so that Dora may not feel embarrassed. Thus Traddles shows delicate solitude for the feelings and interests of his friends.

HIS HAPPY MARRIAGE

Traddles is able subsequently to marry Sophy with whom he has been in love for a long time. On his return from foreign travels, David visits Traddles and finds in his house not only Sophy but several of her sisters. Indeed, Traddles' house is at this time bustling with activity. Traddles tells David that he and Sophy are as happy as possible, and even Sophy's sisters who have come to have a peep at London are happy. Traddles says, "The society of girls is a very delightful thing, Copperfield. It's not professional, but it's very delightful.

CONCLUSION

In the final chapter of the novel, Traddles is described as a very busy man with thick piles of papers. Traddles' hair at this time is as unruly as it

always has been. His hair has always stood erect on his head. Traddles is now living in a large house, though he has to keep his papers in his dressing room and his boots with his paper. Some of Sophy's sisters are still living with them. Traddles and Sophy have to squeeze themselves in a small space. Traddles, however, does not mind the inconvenience.

10 MRS. MICAWBER

A COMIC CHARACTER

Mrs. Micawber shares some of her husband's traits of character, but at the same time she is a comic character in her own right. She has as flexible a disposition as her husband has; she shares her husband's optimism; she speaks in the same grandiloquent manner, becoming on occasions eloquent and rhetorical. And she, appears as a pathetic character at times. In one respect she rises to an even greater height of comedy than her hisband : this happens whenever he claims that he possesses talents of high order but that those talents are not being recognized by society.

HER COMIC DESCRIPTION

Mrs. Micawber is introduced to us as a thin and faded lady, not at all young, with a baby at her breast, the baby being one of twins. There is a comic touch about the way in which she is introduced to us. David says that, in all his experience of the Micawber family, he never saw both the twins detached from Mrs. Micawber's breast at the same time. One of them is always taking refreshment.

KEEN TO TALK ABOUT HER HUSBAND'S DIFFICULTIES

Mrs. Micawber is by no means a secretive woman. Soon after David starts lodging with the Micawber family, she reveals to him the fact of her husband's chronic indebtedness. She tells him that her husband has been an improvident man, and that he has incurred debts which he is in no position to repay. She feels that it is foolish on the part of Mr. Micawber's creditors to become impatient, and to call at her house again and again to ask for payment. She says that blood cannot be obtained from a stone and that, in the same way, no money can yet be obtained from her husband by his creditors. It seems to David that Mrs. Micawber is very keen to talk about her husband's financial difficulties and that, if at any time she happens to be alone, she would even talk to her twins about those difficulties.

HER FLEXIBILITY

Mrs. Micawber is as elastic as her husband. If at three o'clock in the day she suffers a fainting fit on account of the family's financial predicament, at four o'clock she would be found eating lamb chops and drinking warm ale. On one occasion, David finds her in a swoon, with her hair all scattered over her face at six o'clock in the evening, but he then finds her most cheerful

the very same night over a veal cutlet, and telling him stories about her papa and mamma. We are greatly amused by the flexibility of her nature.

HER RESOLVE NEVER TO DESERT HER HUSBAND

There is yet another comic trait in Mrs. Micawber's character. On all occasions, and especially in times of difficulty, she declares emphatically that she would never forsake her husband. Time and again she repeats her determination to stick to her husband under all circumstances. When Mr. Micawber fails to find any opening in the coal-trade, she says to David with emotion, "I never will desert Mr. Micawber". Actually, of course, she is in no position to leave her husband, but she makes a virtue of necessity, saying that she would never forsake her husband under any circumstances.

HER VIEW OF MR. MICAWBER'S TALENT

Mrs. Micawber has a high opinion of her husband's talent. She loses no opportunity of praising her husband. She thinks that Mr. Micawber is a highly talented man who would surely rise high in life one day. On Mr. Micawber failure to earn any money by working at the Custom House in Plymouth, she says that talent is not wanted in the Custom House. She further says that the Custom House did not want a man of her husband's abilities because his efficiency there would have brought into focus the inefficiency of the other officials there. On another occasion she says that her husband is most competent to work in the banking business, but that the banking houses are foolish enough not to make use of his abilities. He is also most competent to work in the brewing business, she says; but the people running that business are also so short-sighted as not to recognize his usefulness to them. Actually, we know that Mr. Micawber is incompetent to work anywhere; and therefore these pronouncements by Mrs. Micawber amuse us greatly. However, Mrs. Micawber is quite conscious of her husband's chief failing also. She points out to David that her husband is always "waiting for something to turn up". She feels that her husband should realize that things cannot turn up of their own accord, and that human beings must to some extent assist to make them turn up. She regards Mr. Micawber as a man of a variety of qualifications, in fact, a man of genius. The responsibility for Mr. Micawber's continued failure in life rests upon society, she says. The only course for Mr. Micawber, according to her, is to throw down the gaunlet to society. Mr. Micawber, she says, should advertise in all the papers, describing his qualifications, and calling upon society to give him a suitable job on remunerative terms.

HER GRANDILOQUENT MANNER OF SPEAKING

Another remarkable trait of Mrs. Micawber is her grandiloquent manner of speaking. She is a copious talker, and she always employs choice vocabulary. There is a lot of redundancy in the use of words in her speeches, and in her writings also. However, we do not feel repelled either

by her rhetorical manner of speaking or by her super-abundant use of words. In fact, we feel quite amused by this proclivity on her part. The letter which she writes to David is an example of her style so far as the use of language is concerned. She writes that nobody can form an adequate idea of the change in Mr. Micawber's conduct, of his wildness, and of his violence. His conduct, she writes, has gradually augmented until it has assumed the appearance of aberration of intellect. Scarcely a day passes, she goes on, when some paroxysm does not take place. Only last night, on being solicited by the twins for two-pence, to buy lemon-stunners—a local sweetmeat—he aimed a knife at them. The use of such words and phrases as "augmented", "aberration of intellect", "paroxysm", and "solicited" shows the writer's literary style and her command over the language.

CONSTANT REFERENCES TO HER PARENTS

Mrs. Micawber's constant references to her papa and mamma are another trait in her. She simply cannot forget them, and must allude to them in the course of her talk. She recalls the life she was leading with her parents and she keeps reminding even her husband of what her papa and mamma did for her. While talking about them, she takes the opportunity of praising herself as well. On one occasion, she says that her papa always used to say that her grasp of a subject was marvellous, and she then adds that her papa was an accurate observer of character. Whenever she talks in this vein, David feels that she is a noble woman, the sort of woman who might have been a Roman matron, and who could have done all kinds of heroic things in times of public trouble.

A PATHETIC FIGURE

Mrs. Micawber often seems to be a pathetic figure. On one occasion she writes a letter to David describing her woeful state of mind as a result of the change that has taken place in her husband. In this letter she says that her husband has become morose, that her husband is now estranged from the older children, that he feels no longer proud of the twins, and that he even looks at the youngest child with coldness. She seeks David's advice in these circumstances. That is a very touching letter indeed because, for the first time in her married life, she finds her husband harsh towards his family.

CONCLUSION

Mrs. Micawber is a great comic character. However, it has to be noted that all the humour of Mrs. Micawber's speeches, talk, and correspondence is of the unconscious kind. She does not consciously say anything to amuse anybody. She does not knowingly or deliberately talk or behave in a manner calculated to amuse us or her listeners. It is just that, whenever she speaks, she says something which amuses us.

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12
MINOR CHARACTERS IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

1. MRS. CLARA COPPERFIELD

Mrs. Clara Copperfield is the mother of David Copperfield, the hero of the novel. She is a delicate and extremely beautiful lady. Miss Betsey takes her to be a "wax doll" and calls her a loving baby. David gives a beautiful description of his mother in the following words, "The first objects that assume a distinct presence before me, as I look far back into the blank of my infancy, are my mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape. I watch her winding her bright curls round her fingers, and straightening her waist, and nobody knows better than I do that she likes to look well, and is proud of being so pretty". Mrs. Clara Copperfield enjoys a brief interlude of conjugal life with Mr. Copperfield, David's father, and is widowed even before her first child is born.

Clara Copperfield strikes us as a very weak and timid woman. She cannot assert herself even in her own house. Miss Betsey Trotwood's opinion of her is most unfavourable. Mrs. Copperfield's conduct before the birth reveals that she is afraid of Miss Betsey Trotwood. It is this fear which hastens David's birth, Peggotty, Mrs. Copperfield's maid-servant, does not approve of her decision to marry Mr. Murdstone, as a result of which there is a long argument between the two woman cry a lot.

Mrs. Copperfield is a very loving mother. She loves David whole-heartedly and lavishes all her affection and care upon him until she remarries; and then her attention becomes divided between her son and her new husband. When David shows signs of dislike for Murdstone, Mrs. Copperfield blames Peggotty for all that. On the other hand, Mr. Murdstone complains that Mrs. Copperfield's excessive fondness for David is spoiling him. The cruel and hard-hearted Mr. Murdstone breaks her plaint spirit. Mrs. Copperfield is so dominated by her husband and Miss Murdstone that she quietly surrenders the keys of the house to Miss Murdstone. She bears all the dignities heaped on her without a complaint. The Murdstones take charge of David's education and severely beat him but Clara does not raise her voice in protest. One day David bites Mr. Murdstone when the latter is beating him. As a punishment David is confined to his room for five days. But Mrs. Copperfield does not have the courage to release him or even to meet him. Peggotty tries to console David through the keyhole but Clara is too aftaid to go near the room. After five days David is taken out of the room and sent to Salem House. Mrs. Copperfield, however, is not allowed

to meet her. She wants to kiss him but is too timid to come out in the open. Thus Mrs. Copperfield is a weak woman who cannot even express her love for her child.

On the whole, Mrs. Clara Copperfield is a weak and pathetic figure. She meets a premature death because of the cruel treatment of Mr. Murdstone and the domineering attitude of Miss Murdstone. Miss Betsey Trotwood rightly rebukes Mr. Murdstone for Clara Copperfield's death, "Do you think I don't know what a woeful day it was for the soft little creature when you first came in her way—smirking and making great eyes at her ...... Mr. Murdstone, you were a tyrant to the simple baby, and you broke her heart .... you gave her the wounds she died of".

2. MR. MURDSTONE

Mr. Murdstone, David's stepfather, is handsome to look at, but is cruelty personified. His name itself, compounded of "murder" and "stone", is typical of Dickens' device of creating an artificial name to reflect a person's character. He is the villain in David's life.While courting Mrs. Copperfield, he is courteous and affectionate, but once he has got married to her, his attitude undergoes a sea-change. David first meets him when Mrs. Copperfield returns with him from church one Sunday. David describes him in the following words, "He had that kind of shallow black eye—I want a better word to describe an eye that has no depth in it to be looked into—which; when it is abstracted, seems, from some peculiarity of light to be disfigured for a moment at a time, by a cast, several times when I glanced at him, I observed that appearance with a sort of awe, and wondered what he was thinking about so closely. His hair and whiskers were blacker and thicker, looked at so near, than even I had given him credit for being. A squareness about the lower part of his face and dotted indication of the strong black beard he shaved close every day, reminded me of the wax-work that had travelled into our neighbourhood some half a year before. This, his regular eyebrows, and the rich white and black and brown of his complexion—confound his complexion and his memory ! —made me think of him, in spite of misgivings, a very handsome man. I have no doubt that my poor dear mother thought him so too".

There is something severe in the personality of Mr. Murdstone. David finds it impossible to become familiar with him. In fact, he resists the early efforts—during the period Mr. Murdstone is courting Clara—of Mr. Murdstone to develop familiarity with him. David notices that Mr. Murdstone is incapable of smiling. And if he ever smiles, it is at his own jokes. Usually he is austere, stern and silent. David does not like even shaking hands with him.

In the beginning Mr. Murdstone pretends to be an affectionate husband, but soon he begins to behave like a master. Not only does Mr. Murdstone begin to assert himself in the house, he also invites his sister

Miss Jane Murdstone to come and stay with him. And now it is Miss Murdstone who gives all the orders in the house. Mr. Murdstone and his sister tyrannise over Clara and force her to give them the bunch of keys. Miss Murdstone pretends that she comes to help her brother and his wife settle down after marriage. But she deprives Clara of her rightful place in the family. Once she has parted with the keys, she is nobody in the house. She ceases to have any say in any of the household matters. She voices a mild protest in the beginning, but being rather timid by nature, she meekly submits to their tyranny. Soon she is reduced to the position of a slave.

Mr. Murdstone has his own ideas of firmness and discipline. In fact, he is very cruel and heartless but he hides his cruelty under the garb of discipline. He believes that Clara is spoiling her son by showering too much love on him. In the name of firmness, he prevents her from showing her affection for the child. He begins to find fault with the boy all the time. The poor child is beaten mercilessly almost everyday. He is quite intelligent but his intelligence is stifled in the oppressive atmosphere of the house. One day Mr. Murdstone beats David so mercilessly that he bites him in the arm. As a punishment, he is confined to his room for five days. At the end of this period, David is sent to Salem House, a school run by the cruel Mr. Creakle. After Clara's death, David is taken out of school and condemned to a life of drudgery in the firm Murdstone and Grinby.

Years later, Mr. Murdstone marries another young woman. And his treatment of his second wife proves to be no better than his treatment of his first wife had been. He ill-treats his second wife too and breaks her spirit. The poor woman is reduced to a state of imbecility. This we see that Mr. Murdstone is a scoundrel and deserves to be bracketed with Uriah Heep. He is a stone-hearted murderer.

3. MISS JANE MURDSTONE

Jane Murdstone is another dark character in the novel. She is described as a "gloomy-looking lady" with very heavy eyebrows which seem nearly to meet over her large nose. David says that he had never seen such "a metallic lady" as she was. Miss Murdstone, she tells us, does not like boys. On first seeing David, she remarks that he "wants manner". Apparently she has come to help her sister-in law run the household affair, but she takes full charge of the house. She becomes a virtual dictator in the house and she treats David in a most tyrannical manner. Her treatment of Clara Copperfield shows her to be a crude and cruel woman without any sense of decency. There is an utter lack of feminine quality in her. She fully cooperates with her brother in treating David as if he were a burden upon them who had somehow to be got rid of. On David's return home from Salem House, Miss Murdstone keeps marking the days on a calendar, waiting for the day David will go back to school. David's presence in the house is unbearable to her. She heaves a sigh of relief when his holidays come to an end.

A few years later, David is surprised to meet Miss Murdstone again. David has fallen in love with a girl Dora Spenlow and Miss Murdstone is at this time working as a companion to Dora. Mr. Spenlow has hired Miss Murdstone to keep company with his dauthter whose mother had died soon after Dora was born. As Dora's full-time companion, Miss Murdstone keeps a watch over Dora, though she has come to an understanding with David that neither he nor she would make any reference to their past or reveal their past relationship to Dora or her father. Then, having come to learn of the secret love-affair between Dora and David, Miss Murdstone discloses this fact to Dora's father. Mr. Spenlow becomes furious with David and warns him against entertaining any hope of marrying Dora. Thus Miss Murdstone acts as an informer of Mr. Spenlow. However, in this case we cannot find fault with her because it is her duty to keep her employer informed of the activities of his daughter.

4. MR. PEGGOTTY

Mr. Peggotty is the brother of Clara Peggotty, David's nurse. His name is Daniel Peggotty but throughout the novel he is mentioned as Mr. Peggotty. Mr. Peggotty is a simple, stout and hard-working fisherman. He lives in the quiet seaside village of Yarmouth. He lives in a house made out of an old boat. Mr. Peggotty has a very affectionate and generous nature. He has three dependents in his house. He has provided refuge to his orphan nephew Ham, his orphan neice Little Emily and the widow of his deceased partner Mrs. Gummidge. He has adopted his nephew and niece. Mr. Peggotty shows untiring patience with Mrs. Gummidge who is constantly grumbling. He tries to console the poor widow in her distress. He looks after the well-being of every member of the family most affectionately and sincerely. He also welcomes guests like David and his friend James Steerforth. In Steerforth's view, Mr. Peggotty is a "thorough built boatman". Peggotty tells David that her brother is but a poor man himself but as good as gold and as true as steel. Miss Betsey regards Mr. Peggotty as a "self-denying soul".

The most striking trait of Mr. Peggotty's character is his deep love for his neice Emily. He had brought her up as if she were his own daughter. In fact, she grows to be the darling of the whole family. Mr. Peggotty is happy to learn of Emily's decision to marry Ham. He is, therefore, stunned with grief when Emily unexpectedly elopes with Steerforth. He is plunged into indescribable agony not because she has brought disgrace to his name but because he loves her as his own daughter and cannot bear separation from her. He lights a candle every night and keeps it in the window of his boathouse to guide Emily on her way back home. Mr. Peggotty vows to make an extensive search for Emily. "I'm going to seek my Emily. I'd have drowned him if I'd had once thought of what was in his (Steerforth's) mind. I'm going to seek my niece". He meets Steerforth's mother and implores

her to prevail upon her son to marry the girl whom he has reduced. He receives a snub from Mrs. Steerforth but he swallows this insult because of his love for Emily. Mr. Peggotty then sets out on a long journey in quest of her. He undergoes many hardships in the course of this quest. His efforts in this direction are rewarded when he is reunited with Emily through the help of Martha Endell. Mr. Peggotty is a man of self-respect because he declines to accept the money which Emily sends him as financial help.

Later, Mr. Peggotty emigrates to Australia with Emily in order to protect her from disgrace in case she returns to Yarmouth. He begins life anew there.

5. EMILY

Emily is the niece of Daniel Peggotty. She lost her father (Daniel Peggotty's brother) and became an orphan in her childhood. After the death of her father, Emily was adopted by Mr. Peggotty as his daughter.

David first meets Emily when he goes to Yarmouth with Peggotty for a brief holiday at her brother's boathouse on the seashore. Emily is at this time a little girl, very pretty but very shy. She has an attractive dimpled face. She soon becomes friendly with David who feels greatly attracted by her charm. David almost falls in love with her. Emily plays games with David on the seashore, and yet is afraid of the sea. She says that the sea is very cruel and that she has actually witnessed the cruelty of the sea to some fishermen. She has seen the sea tear a boat as big as their house, all to pieces. Her own father had been drowned in the sea. The tragic death of her father has left a mark upon her innocent mind. Emily wants to become a lady and says that if she becomes a lady, she would give all sorts of presents to her uncle Mr. Peggotty.

As the years roll by, Emily grows into a beautiful young girl. She gets a job as a seamistreee at Mr. Omar's establishment which arranges funerals and which supplies funeral clothes to those who are bereaved. Mr. Omar admires Emily for the skill with which she works at his establishment. In course of time, Ham proposes to Emily because he has always loved her. They have been playmates since childhood. All the members in the family are extremely delighted when Emily gives her consent to marry Ham.

Emily has a kind and sympathetic disposition which is clearly shown in her giving money to Martha Endell who is in trouble and who wants to go to London. She gives this money from Ham's purse because she thinks that, being Ham's fiancee, she has already acquired a claim upon him. Emily, however, springs a surprise upon all the inmates of the boathouse by her unexpected elopement with Steerforth, she leaves a note for her uncle and Ham in which she explains that Steerforth has promised to marry her and thus make her a lady. Emily's elopement with Steerforth brings disgrace to Mr. Peggotty and Ham besides causing a scandal in the town. Emily travels to several European countries with Steerforth. She, however,

cannot be completely happy because there is a burden on her conscience. She is subsequently forsaken by Steerforth who never really intended to marry her but only wanted to satisfy his last for her. Steerforth leaves a message for Emily, advising her to marry a respectable man like Littimer. Emily feels dismayed and outraged by Steerforth's desertion of her. She manages to escape from Littimer's custody and then has to wander from pillar to post. Her plight now becomes really pitiable. The sense of guilt, which she had been exp·riencing since her elopement, now begins to oppress her. It is on account of her sense of guilt that she had been sending money to her uncl which the self-respecting man never intended to use. After many wanderings Emily manages to reach London where, with the help of Martha Endell, she is reunited with her uncle. Mr. Peggotty takes Emily to Australia to save her from the embarrassment and disgrace of settling down in Yarmouth, subsequently, many men in Australia propose marriage to Emily, but she refuses to marry any of them because marriage, she says, is far behind her. She devoted her life to the service of people.

Prior to her elopement, Emily was known to be a very skilled and charming girl in Yarmouth, but one false step ruined her life. During the course of her travels she learnt several languages. She was so smart and attractive that wherever she went she won appreciation of all. Had Steerforth married her, she would definitely have become a lady. But his snobbery ruined her life. Emily is a pathetic figure in the novel.

6. HAM

Ham is the nephew of Mr. Peggotty, like Emily, he is an orphan whom Mr. Peggotty has adopted and brought up as his son. Ham and Emily have been playmates and naturally friendship grows between them. As the years pass, Ham falls in love with Emily and proposes to her. After some hesitation, she agrees to his proposal. By profession Ham grows up to be not only a boatman like Mr. Peggotty, but also a boat builder. He has acquired exceptional skill in the art of building boats, a "natural ingenuity in that handicraft". In appearance he looks rugged, having a manly physique. He seems to be a fit protector for a blooming girl like Emily. There is a frankness in his face, an honesty and a feeling of pride because he would marry such a pretty girl as Emily. But the news of Emily's elopement with Steerforth comes as a bolt from the blue for Ham whose hope of marrying Emily has been crushed. He is now a broken man. Life now loses all its meaning and purpose for him. As Mr. Peggotty declares his resolution to search for Emily, Ham tells David that if ever Mr. Peggotty needs money, all his (Ham's) savings would be at his disposal.

Later, Ham shows his heroic spirit as a ship wrecks in a storm in the sea near Yarmouth. A man is seen clinging to the vast of the ship, desperately trying to save himself. Ignoring the plea of the people not to take risk, Ham plunges into the stormy sea to save the man who later turns

out to be Steerforth. As Ham approaches the ship, it goes down into the sea, killing him and Steerforth. It is ironical that Ham is killed while trying to save the life of Steerforth who had taken his life (Emily) from him. This noble sacrifice on the part of Ham raises him in our estimation. His honesty, simplicity and spirit of self-sacrifice arouse our admiration for this noble man.

7. MRS. GUMMIDGE

Mrs. Gummidge is the widow of Mr. Peggotty's partner in his shipping business. She now lives in Mr. Peggotty's boathouse as his dependent. Mrs. Gummidge has "a rather fretful disposition". Instead of feeling grateful to Mr. Peggotty for his kindness and generosity, she is always complaining about something or the other. David tells us that she "whimpers" more than is comfortable for the other persons living in the boathouse. Sometimes she bursts into tears, saying that she is "a lone and lorn creature", and that everything goes contrary with her. She is constantly complaining of cold, having "creeps" in her back. She says that not only does everything go contrary with her but that she goes contrary to everybody. Sometimes she says, "I know what I am. My troubles have made me contrary. I feel my troubles, and they make me contrary. I wish I could be hardened to my troubles, but I cannot do so. I make the house uncomfortable". She feels that it would be better for a lone, torn creature like her to die instead of making herself contrary to everybody in the house.

Mrs. Gummidge, however, reveals another side of her personality after Emily's elopement with Steerforth. Indeed, a transformation takes place in her. She stops grumbling and complaining, comes out of herself and thinks of others' feelings. After Emily's elopement, Mrs. Gummidge takes full charge of the boathouse. She tries to console and comfort Mr. Peggotty who experiences untold grief at the elopement of his neice. From now onwards Mrs. Gummidge shows solicitude for Mr. Peggotty's well-being and forgets her own troubles.

Subsequently, Mrs. Gummidge insists upon accompanying Mr. Peggotty and Emily to Australia despite all the physical inconveniences of the voyage and the uncertainties of the kind of life whe would have to lead in that country. When Mr. Peggotty utges her not to undertake this journey, she entreats , "take me along with you, Daniel, take me along with you and Emily. I'll be your servant, constant and true. Don't you leave me behind, Daniel". And Mr. Daniel has to yield to her entreaty.

Towards the end of the novel, we are amused to learn that during the voyage to Australia the ship's cook proposes to Mrs. Gummidge who responds by hitting him on the head with a bucket.

8. MR. DICK (RICHARD BABLEY)

Mr. Dick is one of the many comic characters in the novel. He is a slightly crazy but harmless fellow. On his first arrival at Miss Betsey cottage from London, David happens to look upwards, and there he sees, in the window, a florid gentleman who winks at him, then nods his head several times, then shakes his head as many times, then laughs and, finally, disappears. David gives a beautiful description of Mr. Dick : "Mr. Dick was grey-headed and florid. I should have said all about him in saying so, had not his head been curiously bowed—not by age—it reminded me of one of Mr. Creakle's boys after beating—and his grey eyes prominent and large, with a strange kind of watery brightness in them, that made me in combination with his vacant manner, his submission to my aunt, and his childish delight when she praised him, suspect him of being a little mad".

Mr. Dick distantly related to her. Mr. Dick's closest relatives believe him to be a madman, but Miss Betsey thinks him to be a most sensible fellow and describes him to David as "the most friendly and amenable creature in existence". In fact, Miss Betsey greatly relies on Mr. Dick's judgement and consults him in all matters in which she cannot make up her mind or has any doubts. However, there is no doubt in our minds that Mr. Dick is an eccentric, if not downright mad. In the first place, he is obsessed with the execution of King Charles I, and links this historical event with his own misfortunes in life. Secondly, he is engaged in writing his own life's history, giving it the title of "Memorial", but never succeeding in completing it. Thirdly, Mr. Dick has a hobby which is to make kites and then fly them. He tells David that his object in flying kites is to diffuse and propagate his ideas which he writes down laboriously on every kite. The kite, after getting detached from its string by the force of the wind, would drop to the earth at some place where people would pick it up and go through the message which it carries in Mr. Dick's handwriting. This is, indeed, a queer method of spreading one's ideas; but Mr. Dick is quite serious about it. Subsequently Mr. Dick furnishes some evidence to support Mr. Betsey's view that he is not mad after all. He perceives the discord which exists between Dr. Strong and his wife Annie. He speaks about this discord to David Copperfield who agrees that the relations between Dr. Strong and his wife are indeed very strained. Mr. Dick then proceeds in his own way to bring about a reconciliation between the husband and the wife, and actually succeeds in his endeavour.

9. MISS MOWCHER

Miss Mowcher is an itinerant hair-dresser and beautician. She travels from place to place, earning her livelihood by dressing people's hair and making them look attractive. She is described as a dwarf, of about forty or forty-five years, with a very large head and face, and extremely small arms.

She is so fat that her chin, which is really a double chin, entirely swallows up the strings of her bonnet. "Throat she had none; waist she had none; legs she had none worth mentioning". She is so short that she has to stand on a chair in order to dress a client's hair and improve the client's look. Thus, by her very appearance, Miss Mowcher is a comic figure who amuses us by her short stature and her fatness. David describes her as "the morsel of a woman", and as "the least of women", in order to emphasise the dwarfishness of her figure. She carries a bag containing all sorts of miscellaneous articles which she needs to ply her trade. The bag contains a number of small bottles, sponges, combs, brushes, bits of flannel, curling-irons, and other instruments. She amuses us also by her talk. She is a ceaseless talker, much of her talk being devoted to the praise of herself for being a skilful hair-dresser. As proof of her professional skill, she carries in her bag a few scraps of the nails of a Russian prince who, according to her own claim, wa a client of hers and whose nails she used to pare regularly, twice a week. In the course of her copious talk, she makes some shrewed comments on the character and temperament of Emily even though she has never met that girl. Steerforth tells David that Miss Mowcher is a woman with ectensive connections, and that she makes herself useful to a variety of people in a variety of ways. Steerforth further says that some people make fun of her as if she were a mere oddity, but that actually she is very sharply observant, and is as long-headed as she is short-armed.' However, she becomes something of a pathetic figure later. She informs David that she had played a bit of a part in Emily's elopement with Steerforth. Now Miss Mowcher feels repentant of what she had done. Towards the end of the novel, we learn that Miss Mowcher has been instrumental in bringing about the arrest of Littimer who was trying to give a slip to the police, and was trying to quit the shores of England.

10. MISS ROSA DARTLE

Miss Rosa Dartle lives with Mrs. Steerforth, the mother of Steerforth in Highgate as her companion. Miss Dartle is a somewhat mysterious kind of woman, with something very odd and intriguing about her. When David first meets her, she is about thirty years of age and she wishes inwardly to get married. In fact, she seems to be somewhat "dilapidated" like a house waiting to be taken on rent but attracting no tenant. This woman never says anything straightaway. She merely hints at what she wants to say instead of speaking plainly, her motive being to make it appear to be more important than it really is. Thus there is something comic about Miss Dartle. Later we learn that the scar on her lip is the result of an injury which she had received from Steerforth in childhood. She has all along been in love with Steerforth though she has never told him about it, and though he is not interested in her in a matrimonial sense. Miss Dartle is even more snobbish than Mrs. Steerforth. She bitterly rebukes Mr. Peggotty for suggesting that Steerforth

should marry a poor and humble girl, Emily. Later she snubs Emily for having a notion that Steerforth would marry her. On this occasion she utters all kinds of threats and warnings to the poor, distraught Emily, asking her to leave London and never to meet Steerforth again. Indeed, Miss Dartle's outburst on this occasion shocks us. Miss Dartle is utterly devoid of pity. Later, the news of Steerforth's death stuns Miss Dartle. It is on this occasion that Rosa Dartle expresses her love for Steerforth for the first time : " I loved him better than you (Mrs. Steerforth) ever loved him. I could have loved him, and asked no return. If I had been his wife, I could have been the slave of his caprices for a word of love a year. I should have been. Who knows it better than I ? "Towards the end of the novel we learn that Rosa Dartle continues to live with Mrs. Steerforth even after Steerforth's death.

11. MARTHA ENDELL

Martha Endell is an unfortunate girl who has gone astray. Having been seduced by an unscrupulous man, she has been deserted by him. We meet her first in the story when she begs for some financial help from Emily in the name of their old relationship. Martha had at one time been working at Mr. Omer's establishment where Emily too was an employee. Mr. Peggotty is firmly opposed to Emily's having anything to do with Martha whom he regards as undesirable company for Emily. Emily, feeling sympathetic towards Martha, gives her some money from Ham's purse. With this money, Martha, who is a native of Yarmouth, goes to London to try her luck in the capital city. But she is unable to establish herself in London, and reaps nothing but disappointment there. She becomes a vagrant and then, feeling desperate, decides to put an end to her life. Standing on the river-bank she is about to jump into the river, when she is caught by David Copperfield and Mr. Peggotty. She tells them that her life has become a burden to her, and that suicide is the only course left to her. She clarifies that she had no hand in Emily's elopement with a lover; but they inform her that they know it well that she had played no part at all in Emily's running away from home. In fact, they now want her (Martha's) help in searching for Emily. Martha promises to do whatever she can in this matter, and eventually it is she who becomes instrumental in reuniting Emily with Mr. Peggotty. Mr. Peggotty now sheds all his dislike of this girl and takes her with him to Australia to begin a new life. Later, we learn that, in Australia, Martha has got married to a farm-labourer and is leading a happy life with him.

12. BARKIS THE CARRIER

Barkis is a carrier between Yarmouth and Blunderstone. He drives a cart pulled by a sleepy horse. David describes Barkis in these words, "The carrier's horse was the laziest horse in the world, I should hope, and

shuffled along with his head down. The carrier had a way of keeping his head down, like his horse and of drooping sleepily forward as he drove, with one of his arms on each of his knees, I say drove, but it struck me that the cart would have gone to Yarmouth quite as well without him, for the horse did all that; and as to conversation he had no idea of it but whistling".

Barkis is a silent reserved man. He does not use many words to express his feelings. In a few words he says whatever he has in his mind. It is through David that he sends a brief message "Barkis is willing" to Peggotty who ultimately marries him. Before marriage, Barkis courts Peggotty in his own strange manner. David says, "Mr. Barkis's wooing, as I remember it, was altogether of a peculiar kind. He very seldom said anything; but would sit by the fire in much the same attitude as he *sat in his* cart, and stare heavily at Peggotty, who was opposite. One night, being ..... inspired by love, he made a dart at the bit of wax-candle she kept for her thread, and put it in his waistcoat pocket and carried it off. After that his great delight was to produce it when it was wanted, sticking to the lining of his pocket, in a partially melted state, and pocket it again when it was done with. He seemed to enjoy himself very much, and not to feel at all *called* upon to talk".

Barkis is miserly. He hoards his money in a big box by his side saying, "It contains nothing but old clothes''. For years and years, Barkis had carried this box, on all his journeys, every day. That it might better escape notice, he had invented a fiction that it belonged to "Mr. Black boy" and was "to be left with Barkis till called for". After his death he leaves his money, three thousand pounds, for his wife, David and Peggotty family.

Barkis is one of the minor characters of the novel. Though he is reticent, yet he possesses sincere feelings of love, respect, courtesy and humanity. Although he is poor and miserly, he is inexhaustibly polite and hospitable. He is good to his wife Peggotty and to David who helped him win her hand.

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13
'DAVID COPPERFIELD' AS AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

INTRODUCTION

Critics are unanimous in their opinion that *David Copperfield* is an autobiographical novel. As Hugh Walker remarks, "the pen which wrote *David Copperfield* was often dipped in his own blood". This is true to a large extent. The novel is autobiographical in form and substance, in narration and content. The story is narrated by the novelist through the autobiographical method using the first person 'I'. A large number of incidents and happenings in the life of David Copperfield correspond to the incidents and happenings on the life of Charles Dickens himself. Not only that; some of the characters in the novel are based upon actual persons concerned with Dickens' own life. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in certain respects David Copperfield, the protagonist, is Charles Dickens himself.

BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL

In April 1847, Dickens' biographer casually remarked that a mutual acquaintance could recollect having seen him working as a boy in a warehouse near the Strand. Dickens felt hurt and made no reply at the time. But, a few weeks later, he placed in his friend's hands the fragment of an autobiography provoked by that painful question. Referring to the warehouse days, Dickens writes :

"It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate and soon hurt, bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. Our friends, I take it, were tired out. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar-school, and going to Cambridge ...... My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I have a man; and wander desolately back to that time in my life.

The memory of this phase of his life was so bitter that Dickens repressed it in his heart as long as possible. He never spoke of this episode to his wife or friends or anyone else. But once he had told the story to

Forster, he felt an urge to share it with his readers. The experience, however, was too painful and too personal to be expressed in its full intensity. Hence, he gave up the idea of an autobiography and chose the medium of fiction "which rould allow him to provide an adequate correlative for his pain". The result was *David Copperfield.*

DICKENS' FAVOURITE NOVEL

David Copperfield was always a favourite with Dickens. The intimacy of experience makes it Dickens' most popular novel and according to many critics his best. In 1850, he said, "I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this book.". In his preface to the 1869 edition of David Copperfield, Dickens said :

Of all my books I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am the fond parent to every child of my fancy ...... But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is *David Copperfield.*

It is evident that Dickens has put more of himself in this novel than in any other of his creations. In this connection Baker aptly remarks, "It happens to be in large part his autobiography; and even the reader who is unaware of this feels the warmth and movement and buoyancy which Dickens, in his maturity, put into reminiscences which he loved to dwell and ponder on—and, not unnaturally to idealise and embroider, for it is his life as he would fain have reconstructed it, not exactly the life of fact. There is a plot in David Copperfield and some of the largest episodes are theatrical as any he ever devised....It is a tale of ups and downs, joy and sorrows; but the prevailing tone is one of cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life. And, though it is not entirely free from the ensnaring device of poetic justice, a form of preaching, and a misleading one, it is one of his didactic stories. On the contrary, except for the exposure of Uriah Heep, a few reformations of sinners and the lurid tragedies of Steerforth, all of which are extraneous to the history of David, this is tolerably free from both moralism and melodrama. Dickens had some inkling of the great truth that virtue is its own reward; or else he would not have been so simple yet so moving in the speech put in the mouth of Betsey Trotwood".

RECORD OF DICKENS' EARLY LIFE

In the eighteen twenties Dickens' family had been experiencing acute financial problem. John Dickens, the novelist's father, was forced to shift his family from Chatham to London in 1822. In the process, the whole family moved from precariously shabby gentility to abject poverty. In the capital city, they took on rent a small house in Bayham Street, Camden Town. However, soon afterwards, Dickens' mother rashly decided to rescue the family finances and moved into a larger house, in Gower Street, too expensive for their means, where Mrs. Dickens tried to run a school.

The scheme failed for no pupil ever came. The family found it difficult to arrange for the education of Charles. At this stage James Lamert, a friend of the Dickens family, arranged a job for Charles Dickens, then aged only twelve, in Warren's Blacking Factory in London. On six shillings a week. For the next five months, he washed out and labelled blacking bottles twelve hours a day, six days a week. It was a tedious job. The premises, where the factory was housed, was extremely dreary and depressing. All this had a profound effect on the sensitive mind of Dickens. He felt humiliated, and found it impossible to reconcile himself to the job and the conditions under which it had to be done. He began to keep aloof from other boys doing similar work. Not only did he feel forsaken and alienated, he also *felt* that all the hopes and ambitions he had cherished of making a mark in life had come to nought. It was the darkest chapter of his life he would fain forget and even a reminder was enough to send pangs of agony all through his being.

All this finds a place in the novel. In Chapter XI, David narrates the degrading conditions in which he had to work in Murdstone and Grinby at the tender age of ten. David found it difficult to mix with boys of his own age he did not regard his social equal. The agony conveyed in these lines is Dickens' own :

> No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these henceforth everyday associates with those of my happier childhood—not to say with Steerforth, Traddles, and the rest of those boy; and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. As often as Mick Walker went away in the course of that forenoon, I mingled my tears with the water in which I was washing the bottles; and sobbed as if there were a flaw in my own breast, and it were in danger of bursting.

E. Johnson remarks in this connection, "The soul-wrenching agony with which Dickens sank into the loneliness and neglect of washing and labelling bottles in Hungreford Stairs shadows all of David's bewildered and hopeless desolation as he toils for Murdstone and Grinby. Only the sick humiliation with the very smell of blacking is omitted. David's employers are in the wine trade, a shade above being makers of shone-blacking. Thus David is spared that nauseated visceral loathing that made Dickens as a man cross the Strand to avoid the odour of Robert Warren's blacking establishment. But otherwise David's slavery in that rat-infested, tumbledown tenement is steeped in all the anguish of Dicken's solitary ordeal, day by

day and in all his sense of being rejected by his natural protectors, and cast into a bottomless abyss of pain. The misery that pervades David's odyssey of despair reveals with heart-rending intensity how a child can suffer".

When the financial condition of Dicken's father improved a little, he took him from the factory and sent him to Wellington House, a school run by a harsh headmaster. The school was no better than the Warren's Blacking factory. John Dickens was right when he later remarked of Charles Dickens. "He may be said to have educated himself". In the novel, David first goes to Salem House and then to Murdstone and Grinby. The feeling of desolation and humiliation experienced by David at both these places is Dickens' own.

RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN MICAWBERS AND DICKENS' PARENTS

There is a close resemblance between the Micawbers and Dickens' parents. Both John Dickens and Mr. Micawber have large families to support and both of them are unable to solve their financial problems. Mr. Micawber also shares John Dickens' optimism, his shiftiness, his irresponsibility and his grandiloquent manner of speaking. In real life, John Dicken had to face acute poverty. He was often forced to pawn household goods which he was unable to retrieve. In the novel we find David selling Mr. Micawber's books to a bookstall keeper in City Road and he becomes a familiar figure at the pawn-brokers' shops. John Dickens' creditors were always chasing him. A few days after Charles Dickens had started working at the Blacking factory, his father was arrested for his inability to repay his debts. He was sent to the Marshal sea prison. While going into the prison, he told his son Charles that the sun had set upon him for ever. In the novel, Mr. Micawber is placed in an exactly similar situation. He too finds it impossible to pay his debts and is sent to King's Bench prison. Dickens went to visit his father in the prison; little David visits Mr. Micawber in the similar manner. Later John Dickens was given the bebefit of Insolvent Debtors' Act and was released. Mr. Micawber is released in a similar manner. Mrs. Micawber frequently affirms that she "will never desert Mr. Micawber". A similar sentiment was expressed by Dickens' own mother. To quote E. Johnson : "Mr. Micawber, with his plump figure, imposing shirt collar, and tasselled walking stick, represents the pompous, financially bankrupt, slipshod, irresponsible side of John Dickens's character. Poor careworn Mrs. Micawber, always nursing her twins, pawning the spoons. making blurred, ineffectual plans to establish a girls' school, elastically recovering from fainting fits to eat lamb chops and drink warm ale, is drawn from Elizabeth Dickens as she was in Bayham Street and Gower Street".

SIMILARITY IN CAREERS

There is a remarkable similarity between the professional careers of David and Dickens, David goes to London to work in the warehouse at the

age of eight, while Dickens did so at the age of twelve. In the novel David's age has been lowered to heighten the pathos of his story. At the age of fifteen Dickens joined as a clerk in a lawyer's office. While working in that office, he started learning shorthand and subsequently became a Parliamentary reporter. David follows a similar career in the novel. He first joins as an article clerk in Spenlow and Jorkins, a firm of lawyers. Subsequently he learns shorthand and succeeds in becoming a Parliamentary reporter. During this period, he perseveres and takes to writing novels. But unlike David, Dickens had no god-mother like Aunt Betsey who could pay money for getting him apprenticed, Dickens wrote a few of his novels in foreign countries : he went to Italy in 1844 and to Switzerland in 1846. David Copperfield also visits Italy and at a later stage in the novel he is shown as writing his novel in Switzeriand. But the difference is that the reason for David's travelling abroad has no connection with Dickens' life.

UNSUCCESSFUL LOVE AND UNHAPPY MARRIAGE

At the age of seventeen, Dickens fell in love with Maria Beadnell. Dickens' only income at the time was what he made from shorthand at Doctors' Commons. Some sort of understanding did develop between Dickens and Miss Beadnell; they exchanged letters and tokens of love. But Miss Beadnell's parents did not consider Dickens' prospects in life to be bright enough. In 1831, Maria Beadnell was sent away to Paris for education. By the time she returned, her feelings for Charles had changed. This unsuccessful love-affair with Maria Beadnell had a profound effect on Dickens. Dickens himself says that he modelled Dora Spenlow after Maria Beadnell. Although Dickens could not marry Maria, David is allowed to marry Dora. This may a case of wish-fulfilment. In 1834, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a fellow journalist. They lived together for twenty two years, but their married life was very unhappy. Dickens loved Catherine's younger sister Mary Hogarth, whom he considered to be an ideal woman. Like Dickens, David's married life with Dora is unhappy. David feels tender affection for Agnes whom he regards to be an ideal woman. Then Dora conveniently dies, leaving David free to marry Agnes. In real life, Dickens could not marry Mary Hogarth. He achieved in fiction what he could not in life.

FUSION OF FACT AND FICTION

Thus it is evident that there is a great deal of autobiographical element in *David Copperfield.* It should, however, be borne in mind, that *David Copperfield* is an autobiographical *novel* and not an *autobiography.* As Somerset Maugham rightly remarks, "*David Copperfield* is in great part autobiographical but Dickens was writing a novel, not an autobiography, and though he drew much of his material from his own life he made such use of it as suited his purpose. For the rest he fell back on his fertile imagination". Some incidents and characters belong to the imagination of

Dickens. So all parts of David's story are not taken from Dicken's life. Dickens' parents lived long, but, in the novel David is a posthumous child, born six months after the death of his father. His mother dies a few months after her second marriage. The formidable Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone have no parallels in Dickens' life. As pointed out earlier, Dickens had no godmother like Aunt Betsey to adopt and protect him.

There are various other incidents and characters—the marriage of Peggotty to the coachman Barkis who is always 'Willin', the hypocrisy and the exposure of Uriah Heep, the betrayal of little Emily and the death of her lover, Ham, in his effort to rescue her betrayer, Steerforth from the shipwreck. These facts have nothing to do with the novelist's private life. So the question does not arise whether *David Copperfield* is a full length portrayal of Charles Dickens or not. The French translator of *David Copperfield* put this question which Dickens replied, "the true particulars about my life I keep to myself".

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The discrepancies in fact and fiction can be explained if we critically study Dickens' emotional experience in his early childhood. "Chapter I to XIV of this work", says Philip Haubsbaum, "are a dramatisation, not only of autobiography, but of the sense of desolation in Dickens' early life". Dickens could never forgive his parents for not having looked after him properly. He felt that he had virtually no parents. Hence in the novel, David has no father and the mother is portrayed as being utterly ineffective. To quote Hobsbaum again, "Mr. Murdstone is the repository of hatred against the failure of a real-life father to fulfil his obligations". John Dickens was not wicked but weak, but in order to make him a fitting object of hatred, Mr. Murdstone had to be wicked. He had to be an ogre, together with a wicked sister to fulfil the role of bad father between them. Mr. Creakle is an extension of Mr. Murdstone, young David has two mothers in Mrs. Copperfield and Peggottys the first is charming but ineffectual, the second is effective but odd. It is interesting that both have been given the same Christian name—Clara. The house where her brother lives in Yarmouth is an extention of Peggotty as mother-surrogate. The ultimate mother surrogate is Aunt Betsey, and her house and later Dr. Strong's academy are extensions of her personality. Dr. Strong's school also represents Dicken's ideal of a good educational institution.

The gentle, erudite old Doctor and the well-ordered teaching, the grave serenity of the building and the noble games in its green close—so different from the red faced and ferocious Creakle and the dirty desolation of Salem House—were the visions of what Dickens had longed for and never had. Perhaps too, since the story of a boy who becomes a reporter and then a famous novelist was bound to be identified by readers with Dickens himself, he was unable to resist the temptation to portray his schooling in a fuller and less fragmentary manner than it was. The Micawbers are not

made parents because they failed as parents. Besides they were weak and not wicked whereas the dramatic need of the novel was to show them as wicked. That is why the roles of parents have been divided between the Murdstones and the Micawbers. Dora is based on the charming-but-ineffectual mother image but Agnes combines in her the attributes of a mother both charming and effective.

CONCLUSION

Thus we see that *David Copperfield* is a great autobiographical novel. The autobiographical element in this novel has admittedly enhanced the literary quality of this novel. It has added to the power and poignancy of the work. This intensity of personal experience which pervades the entire novel, has made it realistic and impressive. As E. Johnson says : "Few novelists have captured more poignantly the feeling of childhood, the brightness and magic and terror of the world as seen through the eyes of a child and coloured by his dawning emotions".

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14
PLOT CONSTRUCTION IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

LACK OF ORGANIC UNITY

As a matter of fact, plot is the weakest part of Dicken's novels. His plots, except of the last two or three novels, are shapeless and incoherent. Dickens cannot properly handle his plots. His plots lack organic unity. They are not organic wholes of which every character and incident may form an integral part. Lord David Cecil special writes, "Dickens cannot construct, for one thing. His books have no organic unity; they are full of detachable episodes, characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot". Walter Allen says, "For considerable part of his career, then, he wrote as an improviser, caring little about unity of plot or probability except loosely to tie up the ends of the action in the last chapter". The crudities and improbabilities of his plots are astonishing. He introduces a number of episodic stories sometimes merely melodramatic, which are related to the main theme. Thus the artistic unity is weakened. Dickens was just a slave of the formal conventions imposed on the novel by Fielding and Richardson. Therefore, he could not write a novel without erecting a whole structure of artificial intruque, disguised lover, mistaken identity, long-lost heir, and all the rest of the hoary paraphernalia of romance on which to hang it. In his early novels Dickens used the narrative device of building an effect of sensation and horror of the gothic novels. He derived the chilling, grotesque gothic atmosphere of terror mainly from Walpole, Mrs. Anne Redcliffe, Monk Lewis, Sir Walter Scott and Harrison Ainsworth. It is also felt that Dicken's lack of intellectual strength adversely affected the organic unity of his plots. "To quote Lord David Cecil once again, "Dickens' intellectual weakness meant that he had no sense of form. He could not impose order on the tumult of his inspiration, figures and scenes swam into his mind in a coloured confusion, he hust strung them together on any worn thread of clumsy conventional plot he could think of".

PLOT SUBORDINATE TO CHARACTER

Dickens was primarily interested in characters. In his novels, plot is subordinated to character. He did not care much for his plots and he stretched and strained them to accommodate his characters. His novels are full of charactes who serve no purpose in furthering the plot. We remember his characters but often we cannot place them in the novel to which they belong. As Hugh Walker comments, "One of his faults as an artist is to introduce unnecessary characters, characters who drop in from nowhere,

exercise no influence on the story, and sometimes disappear unnoticed". Mr. Micawber, Mrs. Gamp, Flora Finching, Mr. Crumles, Dickens' most brilliant figures, are given hardly anything to do; they are almost irrelevant to the action of the books in which 'they appear, And these are among his most interesting characters. We remember the story for them; but the story could perfectly well go on without them. The unity and integrity of plot is often sacrificed in the interest of character. Not that there is lack of plot. Dickens' books have only too much of plot. But the plot is, as it were, intermittent. Dickens allowed his characters "to talk themselves out to the full", and if in doing this, they disfigured his plot, he felt least bothered. After pages of humorous conversation Dickens remembers there should be a plot and returns to the main story, during which time the readers have already forgotten it and find it difficult to piece together the old threads. "Very often he leaves a great many threads loose till the last chapter; and then finds there is not enough time to tie them up neatly. The main strands are knotted roughly together, the minor wisps are left hanging forlornly".

IMPROBABLE AND UNCONVINCING PLOTS

Dickens' plots do not grow out of plansible human situations. His plots are full of improbable and unconvincing events and situations. His plots are seldom concerned with the plain motives of human life; there is much in them that is absurd and fantastic. The sudden conversion of Mr. Creakle into the benevolent governor of a prison is unconvincing. In his novels there is no chain of cause and effect; pieces of good or evil fortune happen without cause or consequence. He uses ingenous and unnatural means to cut through difficulties and untie the knots. His closing scenes are often contrived in the tradition of the theatre and are brought to a happy end however forced and unnatural that happy end may appear. Something always turns up at the last moment; dangers and difficulties disappear like mist. In *Great Expectations,* Pip is not left a lonely man as the plot demanded, but is united with Estella. In Dickens' novels, things happen when and where the novelist wants them to happen. Excessive use of coincidence makes his plots artificial and unnatural.

SERIALISATION OF NOVELS

Dickens' novels, before they were issued in a single volume, were serialised in magazines, generally in monthly parts. This alone explains many of the structural deficiencies of his work. This also created quite a few artistic problems. It is possible that some readers may not have read the earlier instalments of the novel or may not be in a position to read the folowing ones. It means that every instalment should be complete in itself, should have its beginning, development, climax, denouncement and resolution, and should also fit in the larger pattern of the novel. Action and excitement must be maintained at all costs; so that the fluctuations of public demand tended to dictate the course future action would take. The one test

of success was—success, which could only be interpreted by sales. When circulation dropped, something was plainly wrong with the author public relationship and had to be mended. Thus, when the rules fo *Martin Chuzzlewit* fell from 60,000 to 20,000 there was only one thing to do : Martin had to be packed off to America, however irrelevant to the main action of the novel the proceeding was. The method of serial publication proved fatal to the structure of the novel. This resulted in making the final novel incoherent and formless.

BETTER PLOT IN "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

"David Copperfield", however, has a better plot than Dickens' earlier novels. It is comparatively free from those defects whichare usually associated with Dickens' plots. A.C. Ward comments, "As to the construction of *David Copperfield*, however, I frankly confess that I perceive no serious fault in it. It is a story with a plot, and not merely a string of adventures and experiences".

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FORM

"David Copperfield" has been written in autobiographical form, the story has been narrated in the first person. The story covers a part ot David Copperfield's life as he recalls it, beginning from his birth and continuing till the moment of his writing. It is the central figure of David that connects the various subplots and happenings and provides the novel coherence and unity, Dickens has ordered his material so that for all their skilful appearance of artlessness they give meaning to his interpretation of his experience. Into *David Copperfield* he has not merely precipitated the painful experiences of his childhood and youth; he has so surrounded them with life itself as to make them part of a larger world. John Forster comments, "That the incidents arise easily, and to the very end connect themselves naturally and unobtrusively with the character of which they are a part, is to be said perhaps more truly of this than of any other of Dickens' novels. There is a profusion of distinct and distinguished people, and a prodigal wealth of detail; but the unity of drift or purpose is apparent always, and the tone is uniformly right".

STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The novel can be divided into three parts of unequal length. The first part covers the first eighteen chapters of the novel. It begins with David's birth in Blunderstone and ends with the completion of his education at Dr. Strong's Academy. The first eighteen chapters describe David's childhood and schooling till his mother's death. Chapters eleven to eighteen deal with David's later childhood, his experiences at Murdstone and Grinby's his stay with the Micawbers, his trip to Dover and his education at Dr. Strong's. The second part covers thirty-five chapters from chapter nineteen to chapter fifty-three. This part begins with David's looking about for a career and

ending with the death of Dora, his first wife. This part includes David's courtship of Dora, their unhappy married life and Dora's death, the development of relationship between David and Agnes, and the exposure of Uriah Heep's wicked plan by Mr. Micawber. The third part covers from chapter fifty-four to chapter sixty-four. This part begins with David's mourning for Dora, Steerforth and Ham, and ends with his marriage with Agnes and a promise of a happy life ahead. Each part of the story ends with one "Restrospect" chapter.

SUB-PLOTS

David's story forms the main plot of *David Copperfield.* However, Dickens has woven a number of major and minor sub-plots around the central story of David Copperfield. The first major sub-plot concerns Mr. Peggotty's family at Yarmouth, little Emily and Steerforth. The second one includes Mr. Wickfield, Uriah Heep and Mr. Micawber. Apart from the two major sub-plots, there are several minor sub-plots. These include the story of Dr. Strong, his wife Annie Strong and Jack Maldon; the story of Aunt Betsey and her mysterious husband; and the adventures of the Micawbers.

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

Dickens has displayed wonderful craftsmanship in handling the various sub-plots in "*David Copperfield.* The various strands in the story have been skilfully mingled together. David is closely connected with Mr. Peggotty's family through Peggotty, his nurse. In his childhood he catches a childish fancy for Emily, and Steerforth was his best friend at school. David is directly involved with them at every stage. David is closely related with Mr. Micawber and Mr. Wickfield. When he goes to London to work in Murdstone and Grinby, it is with Mr. Micawber with whom he lives as a lodger. Later he stays at Mr. Wickfield's as no suitable accommodation is available at Dr. Stong's. Thus both these sub-plots are inextricably woven with David's own story. As David is only a child, he cannot initiate action. All he can do is to get involved in action. It is remarkable that without David's involvement in these sub-plots, his life would be uttely uneventful and boring. Despite a number of sub-plots, the novel, manages to give a unity of impression. Dickens himself thought these stories to be very closely knitted together. He once wanted to use separately the stories of Dora and little Emily to be called by some such name as "young housing keeping and little Emily" for one of his public readings. But he found it difficult to treat them as separate stories. In one of his letters, he wrote, "There is still the huge difficulty that I constructed the whole with immense pains, and have so woven it up and blended it together, that I cannot yet so separate the parts as to tell the story of David's married life with Dora, and the story of Mr. Peggotty's search for her niece".

IMPROBABILITIES

Dickens' plots are seldom concerned with the main motives of human life. There is much in them that is absurd and fantastic. Some situations and events in *David Copperfield* appear to be unconvincing and improbable. To quote A. O. J. Cockshut, 'throughout the book there is no real pressure on reality, no logic and effect". There are so many happenings that reflect this glaring drawback in *David Copperfield.* The sudden conversion of Mr. Creakle into the governor of a prison is unconvincing. The ease with which Miss Betsey, Trotwood acquires legal control over David is equally unconvincing David is employed in washing bottles. He needs some friends and relatives, money and education and he gets them. He wants to marry Dora. Her father does not give his consent. He dies quite conveniently to clear the way. Later Dora dies equally conveniently to make room for Agnes. Mr. Peggotty's setting out on his quest for Emily all over Europe, though he has no idea where she has gone, is improbable and unreal. The relations between Uriah Heep and Mr. Wickfield are improbable, no matter how far Mr. Wickfield had decayed—though he could not have been as bad as all that, judging from his recovery, of which we are told towards the end of the story. We are led to think of Mr. Micawber as a delightful comic character but hopelessly inefficient. His part in exposing the villainy of the wily Heep is highly improbable. The scene in which Mr. Micawber brings Uriah Heep to book is theatrical and unconvincing.

COINCIDENCES

The plot of *David Copperfield* is marked with a large number of coincidences which jar on modern sensibility. In one of the scenes Mr. Micawber happens to be passing Heep's house at Canterbury, just at a time when David is having tea inside. Emily and Ham announce their engagement on the same night that David and Steerforth arrive at Yarmouth. In another scene, Agnes happens to be in the theatre the very night David is so drunk. No one but Miss Murdstone turns up as Dora's "Confidential friend", It is strange that Steerforth's ship happens to be sailing past Yarmouth when it is wrecked; Ham dies trying to save him; David happens to be present on the shore and Steerforth's body is washed to his feet. Later Traddles becomes a ledger at the Micawbers'. Barkis is on his death bed at precisely the right moment to bring David to Yarmouth to be presnt at the news of Emily's flight. It is also a strange coincidence that Dora and her dog Jip die at the same moment. Again, what go coincidence that David and Mr. Peggotty should seek out Martha and be a hand to save her on the night she has determined to commit suicide; and that David and Martha should arrive at Martha's room at the exact time to witness Rosa Dartle's interview with Emily. This is a coincidence. Dickens is not willing to spoil by allowing David to interfere and bring it to an end before Mr. Peggotty arrives, though it would have been much more probable and true to life if he had done so. "The sin, most palpable, most gross, which Dickens everywhere commits is

the abuse of coincidence".

MINOR EPISODES BADLY DONE

Some of the minor episodes are badly done. One feels that the Rosa Dartle story has too much mention for its substance. The appearances of Miss Trotwood's husband are rather pointless and make a lame excuse for providing suspense. And the Jack Maldon—Annie story is melodramatic and unnecessary. The denouncement of the affair is a surprise to eveybody except the mad Mr. Dick. Annie's character is too good to be true, and the whole affair seems pointless and leads nowhere, though it occupies much space.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the defects, *David Copperfield* has a reasonably good plot. To quote Baker, "It is a tale of ups and downs, joys and sorrows; but the prevailing tone is one of the cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life. And though, it is not entirely free from the ensaring device of poetic justice, a form of preaching and a misleading one, since it does not agree with ascertained facts, this is not one of his didactive stories. On the contrary, except for the exposure of Uriah Heep, a few reformations of sinners, and the lucid tragedy of Steerforth, all of which are extraneous to the history of David. This book is tolerably free from both moralising and melodrama".

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CHARACTERISATION IN "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

INTRODUCTION

Dickens is one of the greatest creators of character in the whole range of English literature. He has created a galaxy of memorable characters. He is like Shakespeare in the marvellous creative power of his mind, the creation of men and women on paper who are in many ways more real to us than the friends who surround us. As we read Dickens' novels we are struck by the immense variety of his characters. Every novel of his is a portrait-gallery, full of some of the immortal figures of literature. Once we have been acquainted with them, we can never forget them. In *Pickwick Papers* there are as many as one hundred characters and in *David Copperfield* ninety-five. We can say, in the words of Dryden, "Here is God's plenty". David Cecil comments, "of all the crowded victorian canvases his is the most crowded. His books are like mobs, huge seething chaotic mobs; but mobs in which there is no face like another, no voice but reveals in its lightest accents a unique unmistakable individuality".

LIMITED RANGE

Dicken's range of characterisation is vey limited. He is essentially a novelist of low life. The eminently successful characters of Dickens belong to the low or middle classes. He knew these classes intimately and could portray them with skill and confidence. Dickens was not conversant with the characters belonging to high society of London. Whenever he tried to portray characters belonging to aristocratic or upper class society, he made a sorry mess of it. Dickens did not possess the Shakespearean imagination which could successfully depict kings, nobles and lords without being personally acquainted with them.

PHYSICAL DEPICTION OF CHARACTER

Dickens delights in depicting the physical appearance of his characters. He makes his characters alive by giving a very vivid and precise delineation of their external peculiarities. Dickens had a very minute observation and fantastic imagination and he unmistakably caught the apparently trivial and meaningless peculiarity of the face, the gesture or the dress which gave a character his individuality. This enables the reader to grasp it firmly. Take, for example, the famous description of Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield* :

A stoutish middle-aged person, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes with no more hair upon his head (which was a large one ane very shining) than there is upon an egg, and with a very extensive face .... His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of a stick, with a large pair of rusty tassles to it and a quizzing-glass hung outside his coat—for ornament, I afterwards found, as he very seldom looked through it, and couldn't see anything when he did. Miss Betsey Trotwood is described as a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking, and having an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, and in her gait and carriage, Even such an unimportant character as Mr. Spenlow receives Dickens' attention. Mr. Spenlow is a little, light haired gentleman, with "undeniable boots", and the stiffest of white cravats and shirt collars. He looks so far stiff that he could hardly bend himself. He is "buttoned up, mighty trim and tight".

Dickens portrays his characters first by depicting their external peculiarities and then by attaching to them some tag or label. Sometimes these tags are physical : Mr. Murdstone has 'shallow black eye' and 'thick dark whiskers' Mr. Larkins is 'a gruff old gentleman with a double chin', and 'one of his eyes immovable in his head'. Mrs. Gummidge is a 'love-lorn creature' always thinking of the 'ol' un'. Mr. Tungay, Mr. Creakle's assistant, is wooden-legged. Uriah Heep, the 'umble' one has a 'cadaverous' face, and his hair is 'cropped as close as the closet stubble'. Besides he has 'hardly any eyebrows and no eye lashes'. Mr. Dick is always being troubled by King Charles I's head and Tommy Traddles starts drawing moonfaces before tears have dried on his cheeks. Peggotty's blouse is always getting unbuttoned at the back of Dickens indicates the nature of a man by the tag he gives him.

Dickens' method was to let the characters depict themselves, to let them speak. Dickens observes the individual way of speech of his characters with consummate skill. He catches the favourite words or pharases they use and the themes with which they are obsessed. These words and phrases are reiterated again and again till a particular character is imprinted on our mind. Mr. Micawber is always waiting for "something to turn up". Mrs. Micawber keeps on saying at all odd moments, "I will never desert Mr. Micawber". We do not have to see Mr. Micawber or Mrs. Micawber to know it is they who are speaking.

NO PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

There is no psycho-analysis of character in Dicken's novels, for he was concerned with characters and not with character. He is not good at analysis of character. He is rarely successful in giving us the inner man. Dickens' method of characterisation is not that of psychological analysis but the method of exhibition. He creates a sharp memorable image of a

character with strong impression of richness beneath. He makes us feel the beauty of horror of a character first; analysis takes the second place. The reality of Peggotty, Mr. Micawber, Ham, Agnes and Dora is unquestionably vivid.

ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS

Dickens is not much interested in depicting average youngmen and women. His greatest success lies in painting characters who have some marked peculiarity, oddity or eccentricity in their character. In this context, Gissing comments, "With the normal in character, Dickens does not often concern himself. His greatest success lies with confessed eccentrics". Of all his characters, it is perhaps the eccentric ones that carry the real Dickens stamp. He observed the grotesque abnormalities of their character, and selected combined and presented them to the great delight of his readers. The most successful of such characters is Mr. Micawber, with his beaming face always waiting for something to turn up, and retaining his cheerful optimism even under the most adverse circumstances. The most uncompromising realist is sure to enjoy his company. "No man ever lived who possibly could not have been so consistently delightful. Certainly Dickens' father could not have been so—but in this idealised portraiture we have an essential truth". He is the type of the irrepressible hopeful man, full of kindness, who goes through life an unreluctant pensioner on the friends won by his many good and genial qualities. He is a universal type, such men are peculiar to no nation; they exist in every part of the world. Dickens is at his best when dealing with an amiable weakness, as in the case of Mr. Micawber.

Miss Betsey Trotwood is another example of eccentric character. She can be compared with Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations.* Miss Havisham gets frustrated and trains Estella in the art of breaking young male hearts, while Betsey Trotwood hides her softer feelings beneath a harsh exterior. Her manners and her first appearance have been described by Charles Dickens in a caricature-like fashion. As the novelist says, "On a Friday afternoon she comes walking up to the door with a rigidity of figure and composure of countenance that could have belonged to nobody else. She looks in at the window, pressing the end of her nose against the glass to such an extent that it becomes perfectly flat and white in a moment". She "carried her eyes like a Saracen's Head in a Dutch clock, until they reached my mother. Then she made a frown and a gesture to my mother, like one who was accustomed to being obeyed, to come and open the door".

Miss Betsey Trotwood's subsequent behaviour reveals her eccentric character. She is quite sure that a girl has been born and asks the doctor in a sharp voice "And she, how is she? The baby—how is she ?" "Madam" replies the doctor, "I apprehended you had known. It is a boy. And then follows the scent which is described in the simple the immitable language of Charles Dickens : "Madam said—a word, but took her bonnet by the

strings in the manner of a sling, aimed a blow at Mr. Chillip's head with it, put it on, bent, walked out, and never came back. She vanished like a discontented fairy—or like one of those supernatural beings whom it was popularly supposed I was entitled to see—and never came back any more". All her hopes are dashed to the ground because of the birth of the boy. This fact elucidates her eccentric behaviour. Her eccentricity has been further brought out by the novelist by his master touches. The readiness with which she welcomes David and gives him loving protection reveals the maternal instinct in her. This fact indicates that she is undoubtedly an eccentric lady but she has the milk of human kindness in her. Her advice to her nephew sums up her own character, "Never be mean, never be false, never be cruel". Throughout her career she is never mean, never false and never cruel. Thus Dickens has powerfully portrayed the eccentric Miss Trotwood.

COMIC CHARACTERS

Dickens is most famous for his comic characters. He has created a number of comic characters. The colossal Mr. Micawber stands as an eternal testimony to Dickens' comic genius. He can be compared with Shakespeare's Falstaff. Mr. Micawber amuses us by inconsistency and by his grandiloquent manner of speaking. He has incurred heavy debts he cannot pay, yet he advises David to abstain spending more than his income. He keeps postponing things, and yet he urges David Copperfield never to procastinate because procastination is the enemy of success in life. Although he is a complete failure in life he is a great optimist. He is always "waiting for something to turn up". Mr. Micawber's habitual use of this phrase amuses us greatly. Another phrase which he habitually uses is : "in short". He often speaks in a rhetorical and verbose manner, though sometimes his rhetoric breaks down. When he and his wife visit David Copperfield at David's lodging and find him leading a cheerful bachelor's life, Mr. Micawber says that he is reminded of the time when he was himself in "a state of celibacy" and when Mrs. Micawber "had not yet been solicited to plight her faith at the Hymeneal altar". There is a contradiction also between his lamenting his lack of means and his allowing his family to grow in numbers. Mrs. Micawber shares with her husband the grandiloquent manner of speaking and the use of bombastic words. In a letter to Traddles, she writes that the alienation of her husband from his wife and family compels her to "solicit Traddles' best indulgence". Her husband's wild and violent conduct, she says, has "assumed the appearance of aberration of intellect", and almost everyday a "paroxysm" takes place in the house. Mrs. Micawber amuses us also by her high praise of her husband's talents. She repeatedly declares that she would never forsake her husband. Yet another comic trait of Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, is flexibility of nature. Mr. Micawber feels sad and despondent when pestered by creditors but becomes gay as a lark the moment they are gone. And Mrs. Micawber is equally elastic. There is something comic about Miss Betsey Trotwood also. She

has a horror of donkeys treading upon the patch of green grass in front of her cottage.

VILLAINOUS CHARACTERS

There are a number of evil characters in the novel. Uriah Heep is one of the greatest villains in English literature. He is "the most consummate villain". He is a living symbol of meanness, selfishness and hypocrisy. His continuous harping on his 'umbleness' exceeds the bounds of all proportions. His unscrupulous nature, his fawning hatred of the upper class people and his shrewdness make him at once a despicable and dangerous character. He retains his villainy to the end. Despite his protection of David in the earlier stages, we cannot help regarding Steerforth as a villain. Steerforth is undoubtedly very handsome and intelligent; he undoubtedly acts as David's protector and benefactor at school. But his treatment of Emily, the girl whom he lured into running away from home with him, shows him to be an utterly unscrupulous man. He proves only to be a seducer who wanted to satisfy his carnal desire for a pretty girl and then to leave her to her fate. Mr. Murdstone, Miss Murdstone, and Mr. Creakle may similarly be included in evil and cruel characters.

SIMPLE-MINDED AND KIND-HEARTED CHARACTERS

Then there are persons who illustrate human simplicity and human goodness. To this category belong Peggotty, her brother Mr. Peggotty, and Ham. Peggotty is the very embodiment of loyalty and devotion. She shows herself to be a most affectionate nurse, and even foster-mother, for David Copperfield. She stands by David through thick and thin. Mr. Peggotty is a noble-minded man. He is the very embodiment of benevolence. He maintains Mrs. Gummidge, the widow of his late partner in business; and he rears both his orphaned nephew Ham and niece Emily with loving care. This man's love for Emily knows no bounds. His condition after Emily's elopement with Steerforth becomes really pitiable. Ham shows his goodness and his heroic spirit by attempting to rescue a drowning man, and sacrificing his own life in the process.

PORTRAYAL OF CHILDHOOD

Dickens' portrayal of childhood is unsurpassable. He does best when he writes from a child's point of view. He has an extraordinary understanding of them. "He is capital at a baby". The merits of his studies at sensitive nervous childhood are universally recognised. The tragedy of sensitive ill-used children is a tragedy that Dickens could draw with force, tenderness, and imaginative insight. His sympathy for the suffering child and his childlike vision of the world account for this. The first halves of *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* are among the profoundest pictures of childhood in English letters. Compton Rickett comments, "Dickens did not describe a child—he became a child for the time being. He lived over again

his own childish days. Hence the poignancy and actuality of his pictures". Walter Allen rightly remarks about the delineation of childhood in Dickens' novels, "A boy would remember every brutal syllable in every brutal sentence. He would remember it to his dying day. In nothing is Dickens more palpably true than in the exactness with which he reproduces the intense sensitivity of childhood".

FEEBLE FEMALE CHARACTERS

Whereas Dickens is 'capital at a baby', his female characters are usually considered to be feeble and artificial. Those of the women who have some eccentricity about them manage to be convincing. Women like Miss Betsey Trotwood are no doubt powerfully drawn, "Eccentric, indeed, but on a fine basis of sense and character, is the immortal Betsey Trotwood". But ordinary, normal women fail to convince, women in love have been portrayed with little understanding of sex life. In *David Copperfield*, Mrs. Clara Copperfield, Dora and Agnes come before us as feeble characters. These women are colourless and show themselves to be passive and incapable of taking any initiative. They yield to circumstances without making the least effort to alter them.

FLAT CHARACTERS

Dicken's characters, with a few exceptions, fail to develop through circumstances. They do not change and grow psychologically under the stress of circumstance. They remain the same from beginning to the end. E. M. Forster describes Dickens' characters as flat. "In their purest forms", says Forster, "they are constructed round a single idea or quality; when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round". Forster's flat characters are those which were called 'humours' in the seventeenth century. They may also be called types. According to Forster, the really flat character can be described in one sentence such as "I will never desert Mr. Micawber". There is Mrs. Micawber—she says she won't desert Mr. Micawber, she does not, and there she is. Some of the advantages possessed by flat characters are that they are easily recognised when they come in and easily remembered by the reader afterwards.

As Dickens is not in touch with the inner life of his characters, with the psychological springs of action, he often makes them act out of character. Thus Mr. Micawber exposes all the villainy of Uriah Heep and becomes a successful magistrate in Australia. Steerforth degnerates into a theatrical figure, into a puppet of melodrama. When his characters do change, the change is sudden and unconvincing.

LIMITATIONS

Dicken's art of characterisation suffers from a number of limitations. He could draw characters only from lower middle class or lower classes;

characters belonging to the upper classes were beyond his range. He could not draw complex, or aristocratic types. He could not draw intellectuals. Similarly Dickens could not portray men and women of deep passionate natures. His tragic characters remain shadowy. Thus Rosa Dartle is not clearly visualised. He could not also draw a gentleman. Many of his poor characters like Mr. Peggotty have that true nobility of character which is the inner meaning of the word 'gentleman' but when he tried to depict the manner, Dickens totally failed.

"Dickens", says David Cecil, "often fails over his characters. His serious characters, with a few brilliant exceptions like David Copperfield, are the conventional virtuous and vicious dummies of melodrama .... And what is more unfortunate, even in his memorable figures he shows sometimes an uncertain grasp of psychological essentials. He realises personality with unparalleled vividness; but he does not understand the organic principles that underlie that personality. So he can never be depended upon, not to make someone act out of character .... Mr. Micawber, king of congenitally inefficient optimists, is transformed by a wave of Dickens' wand into a competent colonial magistrate".

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HUMOUR AND PATHOS IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

INTRODUCTION

Dickens is on· of the greatest humorists in English literature. It was as a humorist that Dickens made his name. Humour was the supreme quality of his genious. Nothing in Dicken's novels is more arresting, than their humour. Humour is the soul of his work. It is all pervasive. In this respect, he stands next only to Shakespeare. Referring to the supremacy of Dickens as a humorist, Priestley remarks, "Fashions come and fashions go, and now it is the French who are the greatest novelists in the world and now it is the Russians, but the supremacy of Dickens as a humorist remains unchallenged. We have only one name to put beside his, as a creator of humorous characters, and that, of course, is Shakespeare. "It is true that Dickens has not created a comic figure as great as Falstaff but Shakespeare, on the other hand, not the same comic fecundity. While there is only one Falstaff in Shakespeare, Dickens is the creator of a whole population of comic characters. There are nearly a hundred characters in Pickwick alone and nearly all of them are comic. He must have made more people laugh then the sum total of authors in several literatures, It seems impossible to imagine a day when the world will refuse to laugh with Dickens. The Wellers and the Pecksniffs, the Swivellers and the Micawbers must surely abide for ever, unchanging and immortal—immortals of lesser note, but still the same lineage with Falstaff.

HUMOUR OF CHARACTER

The humour of Dickens is essentially a humour of character. The main contribution to humour is made by his comic characters. It is the comic figures we remember first, before we remember the books that contain them. He has created a host of comic characters with Mr. Micawber towering above all of them Mr. Micawber is the greatest comic creation of Dickens. There are some aspects of his personality that contribute to this comic effect. He has a very comic appearance : Dickens describes him as "a stoutish middle-aged, in a brown surtout and black tights and shoes; with no more hair on his head (which was a large one and very shinning) than there is upon an egg". We cannot help laughing at the ease with which he can jump from deepest despair to supreme joy in no time. He makes motions at himself when a creditor threatens and abuses him. But the moment the creditor departs, he goes out cheerfully humming a merry tune with an air of greater abandon than ever before. Mr. Micawber always speaks in a

grandiloquent manner. We feel greatly amused by Mr. Micawber's bombastic and verbose style of speaking and writing. Sometimes his rhetoric breaks-down, and then he winds up a speech "in short". On one occasion he tells David, "Mrs. Micawber is in a state of health which renders it not wholly improbable that an addition may be ultimately made to those pledges of affection which—in short, to the infantile group". This is his circumlocutory manner of saying that Mrs. Micawber is pregnant, We are greatly amused by the contradiction between Mr. Micawber's practice and practice. Once David visits him in jail. Mr. Micawber weeps and advises David never to borrow money, and immediately afterwards borrows a shilling from him. The comicality of his character is further heightened by his wife, always with a twin at her breast, and always determined never to desert Mr. Micawber. His sense of humour comes to his rescue even in most trying circumstances. He never loses hope and cheerfulness and radiates joy and happiness all round. G. K. Chesterton comments, "If Falstaff is the greatest comic character in literature, Mr. Micawber is the best but one".

Miss Betsey Trotwood is another comic character in the novel. She amuses us by her brusque manner of speaking and her reaction to David's birth. As Miss Betsey Trotwood learns that Mrs. Clara Copperfield has given birth to a boy, and not to a girl as she had expected, she hits the doctor with the strings of her bonnet and leaves the house for good. The manner in which she reacts to the donkeys treading upon the patch of grass in front of her house and her fear of fire in London are also very comic. She further amuses us by her complete faith in the judgement of Mr. Dick, a crazy fellow.

Mr. Dick, who is writing a never ending Memorial, is another comic character. He is obsessed with the execution of King Charles I, and he links this historic event with all his misfortunes. He makes large kites and flies them in the belief that, by this method, he will be able to spread his ideas.

Besides these, there are several other comic characters in the novel. Barkis amuses us by the message he sends to Peggotty and his manner of courting her. He seldom says anything; he merely sits by the fire in much the same attitude as he sits in his cart, and stares at Peggotty who sits opposite. Then there is Mrs. Gummidge who is constantly grumbling and complaining. Her chief grievance in life is that she is a lonely creature and that everything goes contrary to her wishes. Miss Mowcher, an itinerant hair-dresser, is presented in a comic manner. She is a dwarf with a double chin. She is so fat that she seems to have no throat, no waist, and no legs, worth mentioning. Mrs. Crupp has her 'spazzums'. The behaviour of the members of Sophy's family is very amusing. Sophy is one of the ten daughters of her parents. None of the members of this family wants her to get married as all of them are dependent upon her services, Tommy Traddles also has a comic touch about him. He is described as a person who was unlucky as a child, unlucky as a boy at school, unlucky as a lawyer and unlucky as a lover because his desire to get married takes a long time to be

fulfilled. There is something very comic about his hair which is unruly and which remains erect on his head. He persists in his habit of drawing skeletons even when he grows up. Peggotty is so plum that even the slightest exertion makes some of the buttons on the back of her gown fly off. One wonders st the fecundity of Dickens' imagination that has enabled him to create such a large number of comic characters.

HUMOUR OF SITUATION

Dickens' comic characters are capable of turning any situation into humorous situation. Wherever these characters appear, the situation becomes comic, Mr. Micawber's grandiloquence or behaviour has great potential for creating comic situations. Dickens, however, has created some situations which are comic in themselves. While being taken to school, David is cheated by William the waiter at an inn at Yarmouth. The waiter drinks the ale and eats the greater share of other delicacies, all the time giving the impression that I is David who has eaten them. The situation is funny in itself. But this is a very ironical situation. Humour arises out of the encounter between the innocent David and the callousness of the world around him. Another comic situation is the dinner party attended by the Micawbers and by Tommy Traddles at David's residence. Everybody present at the party contributes to preparing the dinner because Mrs. Crupp is uncooperative in the matter.

VERBAL HUMOUR

David Copperfield abounds with examples of verbal humour. As already pointed out, his descriptions of various characters are very humorous. But Dickens introduced something new in comic narration—assignment of tags of speech to his characters. This method he learnt from his apprenticeship on the stage. Dickens made use of this particular device and gave speech tags to many of his characters. In *David Copperfield,* Mrs. Gummidge is "a love, lorn creature, and everything goes contrary with her"; Barkis is always remembered because "Barkis is willing". Aunt Betsey Trotwood at Dover interrupts almost any conversation by calling to her servant, "Janet, donkeys !" because of her phobia concerning the animals. Since most of the characters have been drawn in comic vein, their dialogues are bound to be a source of humour. Finally the descriptions of various episodes and the casual remarks that David, the narrator, makes in the course of the narration are very comic. These remarks are quite witty and contribute to the comedy of the novel. Miss Rosa Dartle is compared to a dilapidated house which has been waiting to be taken on rent by a tenant but which has not been taken by anybody for a long time. David describes his boyish love-affairs in a humorous manner. The second of the girls he fell in love with was twelve years older than he. The manner in which David describes the incompetence of the servants, with whom he and Dora have to deal, is very amusing. Dora's failure as a housewife is described in a very hilarious manner. "Dora

told me, shortly afterwards, that she was going to be a wonderful housekeeper. Accordingly, she polished the tablets, pointed the pencil, bought an immense account-book, carefully stitched up with a needle and thread all the leaves of the Cookery Book which Jip had torn, and made quite a desperate little attempt 'to be good' as she called it. But the figures had the old obstinate propensity—they *would not* odd up. When she had entered two or three laborious items in the account book, Jip would walk over the page, wagging his tail, and smear them all out. Her own little right-hand middle finger got steeped to the very bone in ink; and I think that was the only decided result obtained".

PATHOS IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

In separable from Dickens' gift of humour is that of pathos. In other words, humour and pathos go side by side in Dickens' novels. Dickens justifies Carlyle's definition of humour as "a sympathy with the scanny side of things". A sympathy with what is odd, out-of-the way, bizarre, lies at the bottom of all his uproarious fun and quick sensibility. His humour and pathos are not to be sharply differentiated; laughter and tears lie closely together in his writings and frequently invade one another's territory.

There are a number of pathetic scenes in *David copperfield.* As a child at home, David suffers at the hands of the Murdstones. The Murdstones turn David's happy life with his mother and Peggotty into a veritable hell. Mr. Murdstone severely beats David and keeps him as a prisoner in a room for five days. Even the condition of Clara Copperfield becomes pitiable after her marriage with Mr. Murdstone. She is not allowed to shower her affection on her son. Then, as a punishment of biting his step-father, David is sent to Salem House where he feels miserable on account of the placard, "Beware of him. He bites", tied on his back. The cruel treatment meted out to David by Mr. Creakle at Salem House and the death of his mother on his birthday arouse our sympathy for the poor boy. David suffers untold humiliation and desolation while working at the Murdstone and Grinby's. We are moved to pity for him. Recalling this phase of his life, David says that no words can express the secret agony of his soul as he sank into the company of low and crude boys employed there. Then there is the heart rendering account of David's log journey from London to Daver after he decides to seek refuge with his great-aunt Miss Betsey Trotwood. Another very poignant situation is the premature death of Dora, David's young wife. Besides this, David has to endure the death of Steerforth and Ham. Then there is a great deal of pathos involving the episode of Steerforth and Emily. The sight of Mr. Peggotty travelling all over Europe in search of his niece is very moving.

EXCESS OF PATHOS

Some critics find an excess of pathos in Dickens' works; others find it artificially produced. Such critics react against it strongly. Far from

responding to the pathetic effects created by Dickens, these critics are repelled by what they call excessive sentimentality and unmanly tears. Hugh Walker reacts to Dickens' pathos in these words, "Generalised, the modern verdict is that the pathos of Dickens is overdone and too long drawn out, and that it shows a lack of self-restrain. In short, in his pathos he follows his usual literary practice of exaggeration. "We more than doubt whether Dickens can be called a great master of pathos at all. There is no true lyrical, no poetic touch, about his pathos, it is in the main, the overstrained pathos of melodrama. David Cecil points out that a novelist should take care that the emotion he extracts from his pathetic situation is inevitably inherent in it, and secondly he is not overstating it. If a novelist tries to exploit the emotions of his readers, they are nauseated rather than touched. And the situations will give the impression of being theatrical. Shakespeare could extract sympathy and tears out of his readers because there were no exaggerations, no dwelling upon the subject, no beating out thin. But it is quite different with Dickens. He is accused of wallowing naked in the pathetic. It is also alleged that Dickens' genius had little tragic force. He could describe the horrible, he could be painfully melodramatic, but he seems to have been unable to command the simplicity of real tragic greatness.

In *David Copperfield* too, Dickens spoils the pathetic effect by overdoing the pathos or making the scene theatrical and melodramatic. He has made Mrs. Gummidge a melodramatic character in order to emphasise the goodness of Mr. Peggotty Rosa Dartle's character is also painfully melodramatic. Dora's death is quite pathetic. But the death of Jip, her dog, exactly at the same moment spoils the pathetic effect. The sufferings of Mr. Peggotty and Ham are really pathetic and there was no need of washing Steerforth's body to David's feet. The element of coincidence reduces its impressiveness. When Mr. Peggotty is narrating Emily's story in Chapter LI there is weeping throughtout, Dickens' contemporaries might have liked such things, we do not. Fortunately, such scenes are more frequent in Dickens' other novels than in *David Copperfield*. Since the novel is based on David's memory, events are removed in time, which helps to restrain emotions.

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DEPICTION OF CHILDHOOD IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

INTRODUCTION

It is a very difficult task for a writer to probe into the psyche of a child. A writer has got to be as simple as a child to understand the psyche of a child and yet have the skill of an artist. A number of authors like Lamb. Lewis Carrol, James Joyce and Mark Twain have tried to depict childhood in their works. But only a few writers have succeeded in delineating the child mind successfully. Dickens holds supreme place among them. No other English novelist has surpassed him as a delineator of childhood. The pictures of childhood in his novels are very life-like and convincing. Dickens does best when he writes from a child's point of view. He has an extraordinary understanding of them. The merits of his studies of sensitive nervous childhood are universally recognised. The tragedy of sensitive, ill-used children is a tragedy that Dickens could draw with force, tenderness, and imaginative insight. His sympathy for the suffering child and his childlike vision of the world account for this. The first halves of *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* are among the profoundest pictures of childhood in English letters.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT

Of Dickens' true and profound sympathy with persecuted children there is no doubt Dickens himself was exposed to the full horrors of life in London in the cruellest possible way at the most impressionable age. It is well known that he was sent out to work at Warren's Blacking Factory at a very tender age. It left a wound in his soul that never healed. He felt so hurt and humiliated by this experience that he never spoke of it to his wife and children. The misery that Dickens experienced in his early life created a passionate sympathy in his mind for the suffering children. There is a great deal of autobiographical element in his delineation of childhood. That is why Dickens could tell the story of a boy as a boy would tell it. Walter Allen says, "A boy would remember every brutal syllable in every brutal sentence. He would remember it to his dying day. In Nothing Dickens is more palpably true than in the exactness with which he reproduces the intense sensitivity of. childhood. Like David he remembered it all; the poignant sense of vanity in the griefs and disasters of boyhood, the feeling that what is done or undone can never be made up for; that a joy missed, a pleasure ruined, is something irretrievable". Compton Rickett comments about the delineation of childhood in Dickens' novels, "David did not

describe a child—he became a child for the time being. He lived over again his own childish days. Hence the poignancy and actuality of his pictures".

UNDERSTANDING OF CHILD-MIND

In the first fourteen chapters of *David Copperfield*, Dickens reveals an extraordinary understanding of the child-mind. He presents with infinite sympathy the woes and sufferings of childhood. He is primarily interested in presenting the sorrows, sufferings and privations suffered by his child-characters. The hardships undergone by David under the tyrannical domination of Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone are brought out in a touchingly tender manner. We fully sympathise with David when he says :

> "God help me, I might have been improved for my whole life, I might have been made another creature perhaps, for life, by a kind word at that season. A word of encouragement and explanation, of pity for my childish ignorance, of welcome home, of reassurance to me that it was home, might have made me dutiful to him in my heart henceforth, instead of in my hypocritical outside, and might have made me respect instead of hate him".

DICKEN'S CHILD-LIKE IMAGINATION

David like Dickens himself has vivid imagination and sensations. He sees the world in colours of black and white. It is a place where everything looks bigger than its actual size, where wicked people appear to be monsters and good people are fairies or good angels. He does not look at life with rational eyes nor is he ashamed of sentiments. This is how children see life and this is how Dickens saw it too. Commenting on this aspect in Dickens Lord David Cecil remarks, "Who that has read it can forget the vast, sinister marsh of *Great Expectations*, with the convict rising like a giant of the fairy-tales from its banks..... But still better are the first hundred and sixty pages of *David Copperfield*, the best Dickens ever wrote, one of the very best in the whole of English. Here for once Dickens seems not only living but life-like; for though the world that he reveals is more exaggerated, lit by brighter lights, darkened by sharper shadows than that of most grown-up people, it is exactly the world as seen through the eyes of a child."

INSIGHT INTO THE PSYCHE OF CHILDREN

Dickens shows deep insight into the psyche of children. In one of the passages in the novel David relates how his idea about Steerforth and the other schoolboys is formed by his study of their carvings on the door near the play-ground. George Orwell has made a very apt comment on this particular passage : "When I read this passage as a child, it seemed to me that those were exactly the pictures that those particular names would call up".

The picture of Mr. Creakle's school gives up the essential features of

school life and allows us a glimpse of the working of a child's mind. Steerforth's domination, David's devotion to him, Traddles's dislike of him and the cynical contempt with which the young students view the cruel Mr. Creakle are typical traits in children. Steerforth's arrogant contempt for the kind but poor Mr. Mell is also in accordance with his nature. To quote Walter Allen again : "The difference between the chapters on the Murdstone persecution and the boy's experiences later, are thoroughly in character. The boy will be sure to make a god and a hero of the older boy who reigns to be his friend and protector. Steerforth will be all that is gallant and chivalrous, and the world will go upside down before David will be forced to admit that his idol is hollow".

David Copperfield reveals Dickens' unique power to penetrate the mind of a child. In one scene Dickens describes David's satisfaction at the attention and importance he receives when he informs his friends of his mother's death : "When I could cry no more, I began to think; and then the oppression on my breast was heaviest and my grief a dull pain that there was no ease for.

"And yet my thoughts were idle; not intent on the calamity that weighed upon my heart but idly loitering near it I stood upon a chair when I was left alone, and looked into the glass to see how red my eyes were, and how sorrowful my face .... I am sensible of having felt that a dignity attached to me among the rest of the boys, and that I was important in my affliction .... When I saw them glancing at me out of the windows, as they went up to their classes, I felt distinguished, and looked more melancholic, and walked slower ...." This masterly analysis of the reactions of a child convinces us that in *David Copperfield* Dickens has achieved rare success as a delineator of the child-mind.

CHILD'S INTERPRETATION DIFFERENT FROM ADULTS

In *David Copperfield* Dickens shows that a child's interpretation of things is different from that of adults. A particular scene in the novel can be seen as a wild burlesque or a sinister reality depending on the way we look at it. For a child, the scene in which David is unjustly suspected of eating the mutton-chops, will be a mortifying experience but an adult may view it simply as an example of a waiter's dishonesty. Adult readers may consider Mr. Murdstone to be a matter-of-fact business-man who is always guided by self-interest by a child will take him to be a monster. Grown up readers may not consider Steerforth in a very favourable light but to David and his young friends he is a hero. Dickens is an expert at creating characters who appear in different shades to different age groups.

CONCLUSION

Dickens had a real sympathy for children. He himself had suffered the horrors in London at the most impressionable period of life. The wounds his sensitive soul then reveived never fully healed and he carried the scar on his

mind for the rest of his life. This early exposure to suffering made him very sensitive towards the feelings and sensibilities of children. These experiences developed in Dickens a passionate sympathy for the poor, suffering, orphaned children who were condemned to suffer in a hostile world. Thus he was able to create such immortal studies of childhood like those of Paul, David and Pip. However, whenever Dickens strays away from the delineation of the child-mind he is on unsure ground. After the first hundred and sixty pages of *David Copperfield*, the vision of childhood disappears as David grows up. One feels that Dickens loses his grasp over reality. The author's imaginative faculty seems to decline as David grows up into adulthood. We may conclude that "he is capital at a baby".

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'DAVID COPPERFIELD' A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

DICKENS'S BEST SUSTAINED NOVEL

David Copperfield was originally published in twenty monthly instalments under the title. *The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences and Observations of David Copperfield, the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery.* The first instalment appeared in May 1849 and the last instalment of the novel appeared in November 1850. It was illustrated by the artist Hablet Knight Browne who had already illustrated *The Picwick Papers, Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son.* Soon after the publication of its last instalment, it was published in the book form in one volume.

DICKENS'S MOST FAVOURITE NOVEL

This book remained a favourite book of Dickens throughtout his life. He wrote about this novel in a Preface : "No one can ever believe this, narrative in the reading more than I believed it in the writing. *Of all my books, I like this best.* It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, I like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield".

ITS POPULARITY

David Copperfield is the most popular novel of Charles Dickens. It has stood the test of time and it has been liked by generation after generation. Today it is regarded as one of the best novels of Dickens. Its popularity is reflected in the fact that it is prescribed for study in schools and colleges all over the English speaking world. The novel presents a panoramic picture of Victorian life and society, specially the life of the lower classes of London. The main aim of the novel is to entertain. It is so absorbing that once we take it up, we find it difficult to leave it unfinished.

A GREAT NOVEL

David Copperfield is no ordinary novel. "The pen which wrote *David Copperfield*", says Hugh Walker, "was often dipped in his own blood". Commenting on the greatness of this novel, *Baker* observes : "Both critical and popular opinions are at one, in voting *David Copperfield* their favourite among the novels of Dickens. First of all, it happens to be in large part his autobiography. There is a plot in *David Copperfield,* and some of the largest episodes are as theatrical as any he ever devised. It is a tale of ups

and downs, joys and sorrows; but the prevailing tone is one of cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life. And, though it is not entirely free from the ensnaring device of poetic justice, this is not one of his didactic stories. On the contrary, except for the exposure of Uriah Heep, a few reformations of sinners, and the lurid tragedy of Steerforth, all of which are extraneous to the history of David, this is tolerably free from both moralism and melodrama".

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT

The main interest of *David Copperfield* lies in its autobiographical element. *David Copperfield* is not merely autobiographical in form, it is also autobiographical in substance. The novel is a veiled autobiography of the novelist. David is Charles Dickens himself, and many of his experiences and much of his sufferings are the experiences and sufferings of Dickens himself. Little David in the novel has to do the menial job of washing bottles in the firm of Murdstone and Grinby. As a consequence, he has to work for long hours and has to suffer great misery and humiliation. Dickens had suffered in life as David suffers in the novel. The education of little David is neglected. First he receives lessons from his mother at home and then is sent to Salem House, run by a cruel headmaster Mr. Creakle. Similarly, Dickens was first taught at home by his mother, and was later sent to Wellington Academy of one Mr. Jones. His experiences there were very much similar to the experiences of little David. Like little David again, he had to quit the school after a brief stay and take up a menial job. David's career is similar to that of Dickens. The character of Mr. Micawber is a penportrait of the novelist's own father, and several other characters in the book bear close resemblace to the novelist's friends and acquaintances.

PLOT CONSTRUCTION

Dickens is generally regarded as a good entertainer but a poor artist. His novels suffer from a number of faults. His plots are not organic wholes. They are like shapeless bags in which he puts everything that comes into his head. However, the plot-construction of *David Copperfield* is better than that of many other novels of Dickens. It is without his usual blemishes such as looseness, superfluity and incoherence. It is not a mere string of adventures and experiences, but a coherent whole. Although the Emily-Steerforth episode has little to do with the story of David's life, yet it has been skilfully interwoven with the main thread of the story. The only serious blemish in the plot is the long digression in which Dr. Strong narrates his relations with his wife, and her mother and sister. According to A. C. Ward, "As to the construction of *David Copperfield*, however, I frankly confess that I perceive no serious fault in it. It is a story with a plot, and not merely a string of adventures and experiences, like little Davy's old favourites upstairs at Blunderstone. In the conduct of this plot, blemishes may here and there occur. The boy's flight from London, and the direction

which it takes, are insufficiently accounted for. A certain amount of obscurity as well, perhaps, as of improbability, pervades the relations between Uriah and the victim, round whom the unspeakable slimy thing writhes and wriggles. On the other hand, the mere conduct of the story has much that is beautiful in it. Thus there is real art in the way in which the scene of Barkis's death—written with admirable moderation—prepares for the "great loss" at hand for the mourning family. And in the entire treatment of the hero's double love story, Dickens has, to my mind, avoided that discord which, in spite of himself, jars upon the reader both in *Esmond* and in *Adam Bede.* The best constructed part of *David Copperfield,* is however, unmistakably the story of Little Emily and her kinsfolk ...

CHARACTERISATION

So from the point of view of characterisation also, the novel is significant in many ways. Its characters have immense variety and vitality. They are drawn from various walks of life and from all levels of society. They have been visualised vividly and distinctly. This remarkable vividness arises from the fact that, this being an autobiographical novel, the characters have been drawn, and the world has been looked at, through the eyes of a child, David. Now a child's imagination tends to exaggerate any peculiarities that happen to impress it. Hence, it is that particular oddities in dress, character, physical appearance, speech and manners, have been exaggerated and the gain in vividness is enormous. As usual with Dickens, in this novel also, the eccentric and odd characters are more vivid and life-like than the normal characters, Of the female characters, Agnes, Dora, etc... remain thin and shadowy, while the eccentric Betsey Trotwood is remarkably alive and distinct.

Every character in the story has a place somewhere in the design. His comic characters are best drawn in this novel. "The inventive power of Dickens,'' says A. C. Ward, 'in none of his other books indulged itself so abundantly in the creation of eccentric characters, but neither was it in any so admirably tempered by taste and feelings. It contains no characters which could strictly be called grotesque, unless it be little Miss Mowcher...... Mr. Dick belongs to a species of eccentric personages—mad people in a world—for which Dickens as a writer had a curious liking : but though there is, consequently, no true humour such as Sterne or Dickens could have drawn..... But Mr. Micawber, whatever features may have been transferred to him, is the type of a whole race of men who will not vanish from the face of the earth so long as the hope which lives eternal in the human breast, is only temporarily suspended by the laws of debtor and creditor, and is always capable of revival with the aid of a bowl of milk-punch. A kindlier and a merrier, a more humorous and more genuine character was wanted to complete the comicality of the conception; it was the wife of his bosom with the twins at her own, and her mind made up not to desert Mr. Micawber. Delightful, too, in his way, though of a class more common in Dickens, is Tommy Traddles, the genial picture of whose

married life in chambers in Gray's Inn, with the dearest girl in the world and her five sisters, including the beauty, on a visit, may have been suggested by kindly personal reminiscences of youthful days. In contrast to these characters, the shambling, fawning, villainous hypocrisy of Uriah Heep is a piece of intense and elaborate workmanship, almost cruelly done without being overdone. It was in his figures of hypocrites that Dickens's satirical power most diversely displayed itself; and by the side of Uriah Heep in this story, literally so in the prison-scene at the close, stands another species of the race, the valet Littimer, a sketch which Thackeray himself could not have surpassed".

HUMOUR

Like other novels of Dickens, *David Copperfield*, too, abounds humour. The humour in the novel is varied and all-pervasive. There is humour of character, satirical humour and verbal humour. There are a number of comic characters in the novel but the richest source of humour is Mr. Micawber, with Mrs. Micawber also making substantial contribution to it. It is not that Mr. Micawber consciously tries to amuse anybody. Humour arises from his style of speaking and writing in a grandiloquent manner. Another amusing trait of his character is the flixibility of his temperament. At one point we find him sobbing and making a motion to cut his throat with a razor because of his inability to pay his debts, the next moment he goes out humming a tune with a smile on his face. Mr. Micawber's repetition of the phrases "waiting for something to turn up" and "in short" is an amusing mannerism. Mrs. Micawber, with one of the twins always at her breast, amuses us by her extravagant praise of her husband's abilities, her unwavering faith in his potentialities and her frequent resolutions never to desert Mr. Micawber. Then there is Miss Betsey Trotwood who amuses us by her brusque manner, her belief that she would become godmother to a female child and her horror of donkeys treading upon the green patch in front of her cottage. Mr. Dick is another comic character who cannot finish his memorial because he cannot keep Charles I's head out of it. His act of kite flying under the impression that he can spread his ideas through this device is very amusing. Tommy Traddles, with his hair standing erect, amuses by his description of Sophy, his sweetheart, as the dearest girl in the world. Dr. Strong with his Dictionary, Barkis in his silences, Mrs. Crupp with her spasms, all provide humour of the most genuine and beneficial kind. Sometimes, the humour tends to gentle satire, as in the accounts of law and legal procedure as it is to be found in Doctors' Commons, and of politics as seen from the press gallery.

PATHOS

Dickens is a master of pathos. In all his novels, there are countless situations when we are overwhelmed with a feeling of pity. In *David Copperfield* too, the feeling of pity is mingled with the element of humour.

The account of David's life after his mother has got married to Mr. Murdstone is deeply moving. Equally moving is the account of his life when he takes up a job in Murdstone and Grinby, a firm in the wine trade, at a wage of six or seven shillings a week. Here he undergoes the same mental torture to which he had been subjected by Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone. Then there is the moving account of David's long and arduous trek from London to Dover where he goes to meet Miss Betsey Trotwood and seek her patronage. The plight of Mr. Peggotty and Ham when Emily elopes with a lover is heart-rending. Mr. Peggotty travels all over Europe in search of Emily in the same mental condition. Then the death of Ham also constitutes a poignant situation.

THE SOCIAL PURPOSE OF THE NOVEL

Like Dicken's other novels, *David Copperfield* is a novel with a social purpose. Dickens has exposed and satirised the various social evils that prevailed in England of his day. Schools were run out of profit motive, education was neglected, and the boys were cruelly treated. Salem House is one such private school. The prisons were dens of squalor, dirt, gambling and drinking. Penal laws were harsh, and the legal machinery inefficient and unjust. This we gather from the pathetic picture of Mr. Micawber in the Marshalsea prison. Power was concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists and prestige went with wealth and birth. Social snobbery prevailed. Thus, at Salem House, Steerforth is flattered because he belongs to the aristocracy, and the assistant teacher Mr. Mell is ill-treated because Steerforth is displeased with him. But the worst evil of all was the employment of little children like David in industrial concerns where they were ill-treated and freely exploited. However, it must be added that though it is a novel with a purpose, its didacticism is not obstrusive. It does not diminish the entertainment value of the novel.

DEPICTION OF CHILDHOOD

The most remarkable feature of this novel is a realistic analysis of the psychology of a growing child. In the fist seventeen chapters of the novel, we have an account of the early life of David. These chapters cover David's life, his birth to his completing his education at school. In these chapters the thoughts and feelings of David have been depicted in an extraordinarily realistic manner. The cruel treatment of David by Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstne, and David's reaction to that treatment, are convincingly described; so is David's reaction to the affection shown to him by Peggotty and the inmates of the boat-house at Yarmouth. David's initial torment at school with the placard on his back is powerfully conveyed. Then his suffering and sense of humiliation when he has to work at the Murdstone and Grinby Warehouse are also depicted in a perfectly realistic manner. Dickens has, indeed, analysed the psyche of a child in an accurate manner.

POETIC JUSTICE

Desirous always of emphasizing the good in humanity, Dickens dispenses poetic justice in his books. His villains are always overcome in the end, virtue is ever triumphant. Uriah Heep is a complete master of cunning and hypocrisy ; but he is humiliated. To most of us the world is a dark and gloomy place; Dickens tells us that there is a silver-lining to every cloud, and the generous minded reader is grateful.

A TRADITIONAL FAIRY STORY

According A. O. J. Cockshut, *David Copperfield* is very close to the traditional fairy-story. Much of it is a day-dream, where pieces of gigantic good or evil fortune happen without cause of consequence, where each incident seems detached from every other. The Murdstones enter the scene like ogres; they fade away like a nightmare, and it is probably that no one ever acquired legal control of a child as quickly and easily as Betsey Trotwood did of David. Betsey Trotwood herself is perfectly in the tradition of the fairy godmother—omnipotent, wilful and kind. She has no human need to conform herself to reality. All her prejudices, some of which are cruel, are treated as admirable. Fairy-godmothers have a right to them.

Peggotty's house belongs to fairy-tale and so does the account of Barkis going out with the tide. One has only to compare this last scene with the serious symbolic use of the sea in *Dombey and Son* to see the great difference. The whole fabric of events is woven like a fairy-tale. David employed in the wine firm, needs a kind relative, money and education. He finds them. David desires to marry Dora against her father's consent. He will not relent and Dora could never disobey him. So Dora's father suddenly dies. Dora is the type of featherbrained beauty who is only tolerable when she is very young, and David needs to escape to the safe arms of his good angel, Agnes. So Dora too dies, and of course, her beloved dog drops dead at the same moment. Agnes's father must be saved from the machinations of his partner, so Mr. Micawber, of all people, most sedulously and sulkily find proof of all the partner's crimes. All the shrewd criticism offered by the author of the Micawber routine of debt and misery cannot hide the fact that the financial and professional side of the novel is itself Micawberish. Something always turns up at the last moment. And all the criticism of Dora's feathery selfcentredness cannot hide the fact that the book's emotional life is largely Doraish. Difficulties and dangers disappear like mist and their main function seems to be to give that quickened sense of joy and relief which follows their miraculous removal.

These facts are clear; but it is not easy to assess them. The design of the book seems tobe, first, to give a highly-coloured vision of life through the innocent eye of childhood, and then to show the slow impact of reality and adult standards on this vision. But the balance between the two parts is never achieved. The mature David is at times hardly more than an overgrown childish David; and the author connives at his immaturity by

giving so many of his dreams a solid substance afterwards. At first, the fairy-tale atmosphere is appropriate, but the effect is bound to be spoilt when it creeps in unexpectedly in deliberately "mature" passages.

Mr. Cockshut further says that it is true to say that a fairy-story should be either very native or very sophisticated. It should be either Mr. Molesworth's *Cuckoo Clock* or Thomas Mann's *Holy Sinner*. Dickens, already in the process of developing into a great artist at this time, yet retained to the day of his death some extremely childish feelings and opinions. He was not the man to achieve either type of excellence. But one quality needed by the writer of fairy-tales he did have in superabundant measure—the brooding imaginative force which can endow material objects with demonic life. He could live among his own creations. This faculty, which no one, perhaps, has ever possessed in a higher degree than Dickens, makes the book impressive and memorable despite all its faults. Moreover, the occasional touches of true psychological insight (like the explanation why Micawber never borrowed money from David) stand out from the fairy-tale in splendid relief.

CONCLUSION

"Dickens's preference for *David Copperfield*", says A. C. Baugh, "among all his books has been shared by the great majority of his readers. The early autobiographical chapters contain the most vital and moving pages in all the novels; when purely fictitious incidents take the place of elaborated memories the later portions show some falling off. The comparative vagueness in the character of David himself, by some critics considered a weakness, is really part of the story's charm. David's are the eyes through which the other characters are seen; and what an array they are—the Murdstones and Aunt Betsey Trotwood; the Peggottys; the Micawbers; Dora and her family; Uriah Heep. Mr. Dick is the least offensive of the simpletons and crazy folk whom Dickens, following an old tradition, turned to purposes of comedy. Mr. Micawber is perhaps the best of all his comic creations. There are both melodrama and false sentiment in the story of Steerforth's seduction of Little Emily; but in general, this novel stays within the bounds of probabilty and truth to life".

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CRITICAL APPROACHES TO "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

"There is point in the consideration of Dickens, which, though of the most obvious to uncritical, as well as to critical appreciation, is, perhaps, worthy of more at'ention in respect of criticism proper than has usually been given to it. The point is the immense popularity of Dickens, as it is vulgarly called, or (as it may be put in a form more critically useful) the immense amount of pleasure which he has given to a number of people who, from the very vastness of that number, must necessarily, have individuals and whole sections of readers of the most various tastes, powers and qualifications. Except Shakespeare and Scott, there is probably no other English writer who can watch him in this respect. Now more popularity, especially of an ephemeral kind, of course, proves nothing as to merit; and, though it is never exactly negligible to be the critic (for he must satisfy himself as to its causes) he can scarcely allow it to affect his judgement. But very long-continued popularity is in a different case; and popularity which has been attained in the cause of very dissimilar classes and individuals, and, therefoe, by very dissimilar appeals, is in a different case again. These latter kinds of popularity not only cannot be neglected, but they cannot, without danger, be slightly recognised by the critic and, especially, by the historical critic.

"It may be said, perhaps, that Dicken's popularity has not yet had time, as Shakespeare's has, to vindicate itself by the test of long continuance and some vicissitude. More than a century has, indeed, elapsed since his birth and nearly half a century since his death; but instances could be produced of reputations which, after towering for at least as long, have dropped to a much lower, if they have not fallen altogether. Complaints, undoubtedly, are sometimes made that his atmosphere is becoming difficult to breathe, and though the lungs which feel this difficulty are probably rather weak, their complaint must be registered. But in regard to the other point, there is no possibility of rational and well informed doubt. It is probably safe to say (here making no exceptions at all and giving him no companions) that no author in our literary history has been both admired and enjoyed for such different reasons, by such different tastes and intellects, by whole classes of readers unlike each other. He is 'made one with Nature', not, indeed, by a Shakespearean Universality—for there are wide, numerous, and, sometimes, unfortunate gaps in his appeal—but by the great range and diversity of that appeal. The uncritical lover of the sentimental and the melodramatic; the frank devotee of mere fun; the

people who simply desire to pass their time by witnessing a lively interesting set of scenes and figures; the respectable yearners for social and political reform; the not quite so respectable seekers after scandal and satire on the upper and wealthier and more accomplished classes; there are a dozen or a hundred other types—all fly to Dickens as to a magnet. And—what is most remarkable of all and not most unparallel in other cases—the very critics who find it their duty to object to his faults most strongly, who think his sentiment too often worse than mawkish, and his melodrama not seldom more than ridiculous : who rank his characters too close to character *parts,* in the lower theatrical sense : who consider his style too often tawdry; his satire 'strained, yet falling short or wide of its object; his politics unpractical and, sometimes, positively mischievous; his plots either non-existent or tediously complicated for no real purposes; who fully admit the quaint unreality of his realism and the strange 'some other worldliness' of much of his atmosphere—these very persons, not unfrequently, read him for choice again and again. In fact, neither the uncritical nor the critical lover of Dickens ever tires of him, as both often do of some writers whom they have admired. Some of his books will, of course, in different cases, be read oftener than others; but, generally the Dickens's quality, mixed and diverse as it is, never loses its attraction for anyone who has once felt it. The road to Eatanswill is never hard or hackneyed; the company of Mrs. Gamp never ceases to be as delightful in fiction as would be disgusting (especially supposing her to be on duty) in real life".

—Prof. Saintsbury : *The Cambridge History of English Literature,* Vol. VIII.

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"But you will say perhaps 'Granted his amazing popularity granted too, his right to assume on it—was it really deserved ?" to this question, I oppose for the moment my opinion that, were I asked to choose out of the story of English literature a short list of the most fecund authors, I should start with Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Donne, Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Carlyle, Dickens. Browning. If compelled to reduce the list to three, choosing the three most lavishly endowed by God with imagination for their fellow's good. I almost think that among all God's plenty I should choose, as pre-eminent stars, Shakespeare, Burke and Dickens. Milton, of course, will stand apart always, a solitary star; and Chaucer for his amazing invention less even for what he did than for that he did it at all. Keats for infinity of promise, and to exclude Scott seems almost an outrage on human kindness. Yet if it comes to the mere wonder-work of genius—the creation of men and women, on a page of paper, who are actually more real to us than our daily acquaintances, as companionable in a crowd as even our best selected friends, as individual as the most eccentric we know, yet as universal as

humanity itself, I do not see what English writer we can choose to put second to Shakespeare save Charles Dickens, I am talking of sheer creative power, as I am thinking of Tasso's proud saying, next to God himself, no one but the poet deserved the name of Creator. You feel of Dickens as of Shakespeare that anything may happen; because it is not with them as with other authors : it is not they who speak, Falstaff or Hamlet or Sam Weller or Mr. Micawber : it is the God speaking. They are as harps upon which the large wind plays : and as it is inimitable there is no limit to their utterances. It was so with Charles Dickens from the Sam Weller of his lost youth down to the last when, in pain and under the shadow of death, he invented the Billicken". —*Quiller Couch*

3. DICKENS'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENGLISH NOVEL

The real, the great, the unique merit of Dickens is that he brought to the service of the novel an imagination, which, though it was never poetic, was plastic in almost the highest degree : and that he communicated to the results of it a kind of existence which, though distinctly different from that of actual life, has a reality of its own, and possesses the distinguishing mark of genius so that it does not exactly force belief in itself, it forces suspension of disbelief. To have done this is not only to have accomplished a wonderful artistic triumph, but to confer an immense benefit on the human race. But in doing it Dickens exhibits various foibles, prejudices and disabilities; though it is quite open to anyone to maintain that there rather assisted the flow of his imagination than hindered it. He began very young; he had curiously little literature; his knowledge of life extraordinarily alert and acute, was very one-sided, and the organs by which he attained it seem absolutely to shut themselves and refuse communion with certain orders of society and classes of human creatures. The wealth of fantastic imagery which he used to such purpose not infrequently stimulated him to a disorderly profusion of grotesque; he was congenitally melodramatic; and before very long his habit of attributing special catch-words, gesturs, and the like to his characters, exaggerated, degenerated and stereotyped itself in a fashion which it is difficult to think satisfactory to anybody. He was moreover, a 'novelist of purpose' in the highest degree; he had very strong but very crude—not to say absurd political ideas; and he was apt to let the great powers of pathos, of humour, of vivid description, which he possessed, to 'get out of hand' and to land him in the maudlin, the extravagant, and the bombastic.

"But—to put ourselves in connection with the main thread of our story once more—he not only himself provided a great amount of the novel pleasure for his readers, but he infused into the novel generally something of a new spirit. It has been more than once pointed out that there is almost more danger with the novel of 'getting into ruts' than with any other kind of literature. Nobody could charge the Dickens novel with doing this except as regards mannerisms of style, and though it might inspire many, it

was very unlikely to create a rut for anyone else. He liked to call himself the inimitable, and so, in a way he was. Limitations of him were, of course, tried : but they were all bad and obvious failures. Against the possible tameness of the domestic novel; against the too commonly actual want of actuality of the historic romance he set this new fantastic activity of his, which was atonce real and unreal, but where the reality had a magical touch of the unfamiliar and the very unreality was stimulating. He might have a hundred faults he was in fact never faultless except in *Pickwick*, which is so absolutely unique that there is nothing to compare with it and show up faults (if it has any) by the comparison. But you can read him again and again with unceasing delight, and with delight of a kind given by no other novelist". —*Prof. : Saintsbury*

4. DICKENS AND SOCIAL REFORM

After *Dombey and* Son and before *Bleak House* comes *David Copperfield*, Dickens's favourite child, and a book which has always claimed a category of its own among the novels. One reason for its singularity as well as its popularity is its comparative lack of concern with social reform. This lack is not just a question of Dickens's failure to make a sustained attack on an institution (such as equity, jurisprudence, administration, or parish relief), or to call attention to the sufferings of the poor. These omissions are found in other novels —for instance, *Dombey and Son* and *Great Expectations*. But in all the rest of Dickens's novels from *Oliver Twist* through *Our Mutual Friend*, there is the sense that society is pervaded by ruthless egotism and needs a radical moral reformation. *David Copperfield*, despite the Murdstones, Creakle, Steerforth, Uriah Heep and his mother, lacks this sense. Except in the early episode of David's conflict with the Murdstones, the emphasis is on the need for personal disciplines, not on the need for caritas.

This shift in orientation is reflected in the marriages which make up the plot. In earlier novels a bad marriage was a mercenary one, characteristically forced on young people by their calculating elders : in *Copperfield* most of the bad marriages are disinterested, innocent, and impulsive while the good marriages—Peggotty's to Barkis, Annie's to Dr. Strong, David's to Agnes—are passionless and carefully weighed.

—*Ross H. Danby*

5. DICKENS'S HUMOUR

If we strain at accepting Dickens as a thorough-going rebel or outcast, however, it is, above all, on account of his humour. Only someone who misses the point about Dickens would want to start explaining his follies ..... Perhaps one ought to applaud Dickens when one finds him funny and leave it at that, but taking his humour for granted comes after a time to suggest a failure of response. And Dickens without humour is a very lop-sided creature indeed, other aspects of his work are invitably exaggerated,

including the degree of his estrangement from society. His humour may be subversive, even diabolical, but it also helps to dissolve his anger; his laughter reconciles as well as disrupts, and 'satirist' has never seemed an adequate label for him. But comedy which urges us to accept our limitations (not the only kind in Dickens of course) is up to a point urging us to accept the limitations of the world in which we live just as 'common sense' involves a tacit recognition of what is and what isn't possible within the established social order. —*John Gross*

6. THE IMPROBABLE IN DICKEN'S CHARACTERS

The uniqueness of Dickens's most successful creations is readily apparent in their speech. His really flat characters (his insipid heroes and heroines in many instances) have no distinctive style. They are mere types. They are more ordinary, more natural and hence should supposedly be more probable. Instead they are mechanical and lifeless. Placed in a world of highly stylized, strongly-coloured individuals, they are pale and insignificant, and, paradoxically, improbable .... a second aspect of Dickens's method is his use of comic exuberance. He was aware that this too can lead to improbabilities. —*George H. Ford*

7. SOCIAL SATIRE

"The truth is that Dickens's criticism of society is almost exclusively moral. Hence the utter lack of any constructive suggestion anywhere in his work. He attacks the laws, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without ever clearly suggesting what he would put in their places. Of course it is not necessarily the business of a novelist or a satirist, to make constructive suggestions, but the point is that Dickens's attitude is at bottom not even destructive. There is no clear sign that he wants the existing order to be overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it were overthrown. For in reality his target is not so much society as 'human nature'. It would be difficult to point anywhere in his books to a passage suggesting that the economic system is wrong *as a system*. Nowhere for instance does he make an attack on private enterprise or private property. Even in a book like 'Our Mutual Friend', which turns on the power of corpses to interfere with living people by means of idiotic wills, it does not occur to him to suggest that individuals ought not to have this irresponsible power". —*George Orwell*

8. CHARACTERISATION

"When Dickens is at his greatest he needs no such devices to make us believe in his personages. Imagination shows itself in their root conception. His method of drawing them shows him once more as the typically Victorian. His great characters are all character parts. Mrs. Gamp and the rest of them are less intellectually conceived, their idiosyncracies more emphatically insisted on even than those of the characters of Fielding or

Scott or Smollett. As these were slightly caricatured, so are Dickens figures startlingly caricatured. If they analyse them little, Dickens analyses them less. Indeed, as we have seen, he looked at them so little from the intellectual point of view, concentrated so much on their outward characteristics, at the expense of their inner man, that now and again he lost sight of that inner man altogether, and transformed him, by an unconvincing miracle, into someone else. But, as Fielding and Scott and the other could fill their characters with an individuality beyond the power of meticulous realists, so much the more did Dickens.

It is here we come to the secret of Dickens' success. His was a fantastic genius. But fantasy, unles it is to be a more ephemeral entertainment, must refer to reality : a good caricature is always a good likeness. Dickens' figures, for all that they are caricatures, derive their life from the fact that they do reveal, to an extraordinary degree, a certain respect of real human nature—its individuality. As Trollope shows us living man in his social relations, and Dostoievski as a soul aspiring to God, so Dickens shows him as an individual. He had no special insight into the qualities which are characteristic of man as man; he had an acute discernment of those qualities which divide him from other men. In consequence he does not tell us much of the inner life; for it is in contrast with other men that individua' characteristics reveal themselves most vividly. Nor as he much to tell us of human beings at the great crises of their lives, when individual differences are merged in common humanity. In those moments of death and despair when Tess or Meg Merrilies assume the sublime impersonal stature of man speaking for mankind, Dickens' characters dwindle to conventional mouthpieces of conventional sentiment. But his power to perceive the spark of individuality that resides in everybody, is enequalled. Dickens' characters are not drawn from the exceptional among the sons of men, they are not geniuses or kings or saints or great criminals, they are char-women and school masters and shopkeepers and tramps yet they are none of them types. No two are the same; and there are an enormous number of them. Of all the crowded Victorian canvases his is the most crowded. His books are like mobs, huge seething chaotic mobs, but mobs in which there is no face like another, no voice but reveals in its lightest accents a unique unmistakable individuality". —*Lord David Cecil*

9. REALISM

"By contrast with Scott, he may be called a realist; for there are no mists of time or space to throw a glamour over his subjects. He takes what is nearest to his hand, what he knows best. Even in Pickwick, before he had developed 'a purpose' there is stern reality enough in the scenes in the fleet prison. But in the strict sense of the word he is not a realist at all; on the contrary his work is rather the romance of the streets of London. By way of reaction against the romantic tendency to choose themes from high life, to depict distant times and to feed the mind on marvels, the realist tends to lay

stress upon the sordidness of the streets, the depth of the miseries, the vileness of the vices he depicts. He sometimes run risk of forgetting that there is anything else to depict. By a curious perversity he comes to regard ugliness as more real than beauty and vice than virtue. It is not so with Dickens. His instinct is rather to pick out the gleam of beauty from the midst of ugliness and the example of virtue from among the multitudes of the vicious. There are many vile characters in his pages, Fagin and Sikes and all their crew, and there are many sordid scenes. Frequently his taste is questionable; and at least one scene, the picture of spontaneous combustion is loathsome. But such scenes are aberrations, things not at all of the essence of the method. They are partly due to the fact that Dickens was himself uncertain how far his reaction ought to carry him. That he was not proceeding upon a clearly-understood principle is shown plainly enough by the haphazard origin of his masterpiece. He simply felt that common life supplied excellent literary material, that he was familiar with it, and could handle it. He suspected that others, like himself, would prefer to the Middle Ages their own time and country; but he had thought out nothing, he had no views on the question of what was and what was not proper material for the novelist. Spontaneous combustion might do as well as anything else.

Dickens, however, shares this vagueness as to the principle with the great majority of imaginative writers; and at the beginning his tact usually kept him right. It was when he took upon him to be a reformer of schools, of legal systems of government offices and of morals and society in general that he committed his worst mistakes. Prior to this stage his humour was the guide. He used what was humorously effective, and rejected what was not. Afterwards his canon of inclusion or exclusion was serviceableness to the purpose, or the reverse; and it was not a cannon of art it naturally led to error in art.

Notwithstanding his errors—perhaps in his errors as much as elsewhere—Dickens remains the romancer of the London streets. This is evident from the intrinsic qualities of his work as well as from a comparison with recent realism. The statement that the characters of Dickens are protraits or mosaics requires explanation and qualification. They are always founded on, but they are rarely transcripts of the real; the germ lies in experience, but it is nourished into life by imagination. The imagination of the author harmonises the whole Pickwick group. Winkle, with his lying pretence to spórtsmanship treated realistically would be repellent; treated humoristically, though he rouses the justly indignant Pickwick to call him 'humbug', he moves the reader only to mirth. The Weller family, realistically handled, might have been sordid; but under the treatment of Dickens they become the very quintessence of faithful service of wholesome with acuteness strangely mingled with simplicity.

If the Slumland of the realist be darker it is to be feared that that of Dickens is far brighter and better than the actual Slumland of London. There is a glamour over it, a light that never was on the haunts of vice and

destitution. What Dickens gives us is not the bare hard fact, but the fact suffused with the glow of a rich imagination. Poetic justice reigns; the wicked are punished, and the righteous get compensation for their suffering, even as Job received twice over all that he had lost. There are horrors in prison life : but Pickwick descends as a liberating angel to Jingle, Oliver Twist falls among thieves, but poetic justice restores him safe and uncontaminated to his true position. Abominations have been perpetrated in schools; but the good knight Nickleby redresses the wrongs of Smike, and makes at least his latter days peaceful.

In Gissing's admirable monograph on Dickens; this tendency to idealisation is dwelt upon, and sympathetic as the criticism is, there is a consciousness of superiority and almost a touch of condenscension in the contrast with the sternness and unswerving truth of modern realism. But now when the solid atom itself seems to be dissolving, some doubt is permissible as to the degrees of reality of the 'real' and the 'ideal'. It is certain that Dickens 'idealised'; but it is not so certain that in doing so he wandered farther from the truth than the realist. On the contrary, as has been hinted already, a vivid imagination may have kept him nearer to it. The realist is usually a spectator of that which he describes whether it be animate or inanimate. His characters are to him something external; he believes that he understands them, but he does not identify himself with them. This is true even of a man so great as Thackeray, who constantly stops to comment on and discuss his 'puppets,' and who is obviously quite aware of the strings by which they are moved. But Dickens, according to those who knew him, absolutely was for the time the character he was shaping. All creative writers have in some degree a feeling of intimate concern with the fortune their of characters; but probably no one else has left such evidence of it in the letters he wrote and in conversation with friends as Dickens. It is atleast possible that the mesmeric power and the healing touch which Dickens possessed may have sprung from the same root. All may be forms of sympathy, and sympathy usually means understanding. Dickens's mode of conception was intuitive, the realist's is critical. The former is less under control than the latter, but the results it yields are more sure". —*Hugh Walker*

10. STYLE

"Dickens is a great writer by virtue of the spontaneity of his verve, and this with a minimum art. His vocabulary has super-abundant wealth; it wells up naturally and easily; all the inherent genius of the English race for concrete perception goes to nourish it. It carries with it, and turns to use the contents of other veins of speech :—learned words, technical terms; but the main inexhaustible stream is drawn from the fund of a racy, national, in no way particularised experience. The refining process of culture is less perceptible here than in the works of many other writers. Dickens, like Carlyle, has his touches of vulgarity—hardly perceptible, at once forgotten

under the spell of his delicately generous heart. The highest quality of his style is its movement which is at times strained and difficult to follow, but, in its uninterrupted onward flow, carries on the narration or dialogue wihout any fear of stagnating inertia. In certain respects the conversations in Dicken's novels are unequalled; the most familiar tones, those of artless comedy or of expressive self-revelation, have in the mouths of his characters a frankness, an appropriateness reaching to be perfection. On the other hand, when the situation tends to be artificial, and the verve less spontaneous, an unreal note is immediately perceptible in the dialogue. For the latter has not value in itself. Dickens does not seek to be objective by system and rule; those among his personages who are replete with life have a voice of their own, just as they have an individual physiognomy; the others speak in a somewhat artificial tone, which sounds iike a thinly veiled echo of the writer's own voice.

No analysis can grasp the essential originality of such a work; its power of persuasion, which sweeps away our reserves, makes us forgive all the faults of too insistent a method, of a sentimental search for pathos, of an excessive striving after comic effects. Each of these weaknesses is compensated by merits of greater importance. Everything considered, it is due to his talent of sympathy, to his sense of the pitiful tragedy of daily life and to a rich vein of inventive comedy, that Dickens redeems all his blemishes and keeps his place in the front rank. —*Cazamian*

11. POPULARITY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD

"Both critical and popular opinions are at one in noting *David Copperfield* (1850) their favourite among the novels of Dickens. First of all, it happens to be in large part his autobiography; and even the reader, who is unaware of this feels the warmth and movement and buoyancy which Dickens, in his maturity, put into reminiscences which he loved to dwell and ponder on—and, not unnaturally to idealise and embroider, for it is his life as he would fain have reconstructed it, not exactly the life of fact. There is a plot in *David Copperfield* and some of the largest episodes are as theatrical as any he ever devised. That plot in truth, often reminds one of the loose, ill-fitting suit which David had to put on when he arrived, barefoot and in rags, at his Aunt Betsey's. But the plot business is so detachable from the story of David, it interferes so little in retrospect with more interesting context, that the tale runs in our memory more limpidly and unimpeded than that in any other of Dicken's novels. It is a tale of ups and downs, joys and sorrows; but the prevailing tone is one of cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life. And, though it is not entirely free from the ensnaring device of poetic justice, a form of preaching, and a misleading one, since it does not agree with ascertained facts, this is not one of his didactic stories. On the contrary, except for the exposure of Uriah Heep, a few reformations of sinners, and the lurid tragedy of Steerforth, all of which are extraneous to the history of David,

this is tolerably free from both moralism and melodrama. Dickens had some inkling of the great truth that virtue is its own reward and ought to be a sufficient reward; else he would not have been so simple and yet so moving in the speech put in the mouth of Betsey Trotwood : "Never", said my aunt, "be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel. Avoid these three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you".

It is the beauty and desirableness of courage and unselfishness that count or ought to count in a novel. A reader may forget whether David Copperfield or any one else in the book gets in the end his proper recompense; but no one will ever forget the sterling goodness of Peggotty and Mrs. Betsey Trotwood, or the spirit of brotherliness and loyalty that sheds such brightness and harmony over the whole picture". —*Baker*

12. ON THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT IN THE NOVEL

Dickens said in the preface of the second edition of *David Copperfield* that he liked this the best of all his books. He must have felt, and he may have intended to acknowledge, with due discretion, his autobiographical intimacy with its story; at any rate here, and nowhere else, he made covert exposure of the childhood-shame of the blacking factory, and perhaps comforted himself thereby; and here he used his infatuation with Maria Beadnell and his unhappy marriage, and his father's buoyant recklessness and sublimely pompous idiom; and here he argued out, with more thoroughness than has been recognized, his career and vocation as a writer. But more of that later. My immediate purpose is to suggest that in liking, *Copperfield* was the best, Dickens believed that it was the best (his unsolemn seriousness about his work points to this conclusion); and to refer so high an estimate, which very many of his readers have shared, to a yardstick respected by him and by them—the one that informs the old serial-writer's admonition : 'Make me laugh. Make 'em cry, Make 'em wait'. —*John Jones.*

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"The book's most unsatisfactory aspect is undoubtedly the fake autobiographical. It is difficult to criticise because obviously any novelist has a perfect right to invent a fictional character partly like and partly unlike himself. But here we have something more than that. There are some incidents which make no sense at all in terms of the plot and of David's position in the world. But they become crystal clear as soon as they are seen as an attempt to exercise to tame intractable and bitter memories. Take for instance, David's account of his fears when he was first taken to Dr. Strong's school in Canterbury. 'But, troubled as I was, by want of boyish skill, and of book-learning too, I was made infinitely more uncomfortable by the consideration that, in what I did not know, I was much farther removed from my companions than in what I did not. My mind ran on what they would think, if they knew of my familiar acquaintance with the King's

Bench Prison ? Was there anything about me that would reveal my connection with the Micawber family—all these pawnings and sellings, and suppers in spite of myself ?

Now David has no family connection with Micawber. He has merely paid to lodge in his house in a distant part of the country. He might expect, in the ordinary course of events, never to see Micawber again. And there is no disgrace attached to having had normal business transaction with a man who later becomes an insolvent debtor. Surely, we are justified in saying that this incomprehensible fear only makes sense if it reflects the author's own feeling of disgrace about his father's sojourn in the debtor's prison.

"After this, we begin to notice other facts which point in the same direction—that the blacking factory is changed to the more gentlemanly counting-house in the wine trade. While David's father is conveniently dead the alien Murdstone has to bear the weight of the childish resentment, which Dickens undoubtedly felt against his own mother, while David's mother is more sinned against than sinning.

"Perhaps the most extraordinary example is the transformation of the sadistic schoolmaster Creakle of Salem House. 'He had a delight in cutting at the boys, which was like the satisfaction of carving appetite .... I am sure that when I think of the fellow now, my blood rises against him with the disinterested indignation I should feel if I could have known all about him without ever having been in his power; but it rises hotly because I know him to have been an incapable brute, who had no more right to be possessed of the great trust he held, than to be Lord High Admiral or Commander-in-Chief in either which capacities it is probably that he would have done infinitely less mischief". That is no childish complaint; it is a balanced adult analysis. It is not surprising that such a man should wish to be a magistrate and to concern himself with the administration of prisons. But we can only be astonished when we find that Creakle's prison is a model one, and that David's bitter complaint against it, strongly echoed by Dickens, is that it is too costly and too comfortable. Creakle now admires and adores the prisoners. That is odd enough, but it is odder still that Creakle is not supposed essentially to have changed.There is no conversion or repentance. His credulous subservient attitude to the prisoners is due to the same perverted character he revealed long ago. Why ? Of course, because, Uriah Heep and Steerforth's servant Littimer are among the prisoners. The urge to vengeance against them is very strong. So the man who thwarts David's vengeful feeling by making his enemies so comfortable is treated as cruel. This purely emotional link between the first and second Creakle seems to be the only one. It would have been easy to invent another character as governor of the prison.

"Now the type of self-pity shown in this strange illogical identification is sinister. The natural and venial self-pity of a man remembering boyhood-sufferings is merging into the self-pity of the adult, denied his right to punish everybody who has annoyed him. It is very close to violence and

tyranny. One recalls Auden's lines in *Epitaph on a Tyrant* : "When he cried, the little children died in the street". This prison-scene is a very minor one; but it gives a very important clue to what is wrong with the whole book. *David Copperfield* goes bad at the point where retrospective reverie merges into disingenious self-justification, thirsting for vengeance".

—A. O. J. Cockshut : *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*

14. DICKENS VIEWS OF MARRIAGE

"As John Forster says, 'everything in the fortunes of the actors shows us that a true marriage, and loyalty to the 'purities or the home' are the underlying subject of the book. This is brought out very strongly in the story of David, Dora and Agnes; but it is also the only good reason for the tale of the Strongs and Maldoms, it links up with Steerforth and Emily, and even with the lesser characters, such as Aunt Betsey and her mysterious husband : Peggotty and Barkis; the Traddleses and the Micawbers. It is not too much to say, that when Miss Trotwood calls David's mother 'a very Baby', in the first chapter, and she confesses that she was but a childish widow, and would be a childish mother if she lived, Dickens had already thought of 'David's child-wife' Dora".

—K. J. Fielding : *Charles Dickens.*

15. THEME

"Central to Dickens's treatment of the growth of David's character and development of his self-knowledge is the theme of the undisciplined heart. This theme is not, however, confined to David and Annie Strong; it pervades the novel .... On the one hand are awful passion, enthusiasm, fancy, romance; on the other hand are common sense and worldly wisdom expressed in prudent marriage".

—H. Ross Danby : *Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens.*

16. DAVID COPPERFIELD AS A TRADITIONAL FAIRY STORY

"Everyone has noticed, I suppose, how close *David Copperfield* is to the traditional fairy-story. Much of it is a day-dream, where pieces of gigantic good or evil fortune happen without cause or consequence, where each incident seems detached from every other. The Murdstones enter the scene like ogres; they fade away like a nightmare, and it is probably that no one ever acquired legal control of a child as quickly and easily as Betsey Trotwood did of David. Betsey Trotwood herself is perfectly in the tradition of the fairy-godmother —omnipotent; wilful and kind. She has no human need to conform herself to reality. All her prejudices, some of which are cruel, are treated as admirable. Fairy-godmothers have a right to them.

"Peggotty's house belongs to fairy-land and so does the account of Barkis going out with the tide. One has only to compare this last scene with the serious symbolic use of the sea in *Dombey and Son* to see the great difference. And moreover, *Dombey and Son* had already been written : the

Barkis episode is not the product of immaturity, but of a kind of deliberate relapse to an earlier and less exacting method. It is not just a study of local superstitions and of a child's eager response to them. For the fact follows the superstition, just as it does in fairy-tales. Throughout the book, there is no real pressure on reality, no logic of cause and effect. We are almost in Freud's territory of the omnipotence of thought. David, employed in the wine-firm, needs a kind relative, money and education. He finds them. David desires to marry Dora against her father's consent. He will not relent, and Dora could never disobey him. Dora's father suddenly dies. Dora is the type of feather-brained beauty who is only tolerable when she is very young and David needs to escape to the safe arms of his good angel, Agnes. So Dora dies too and, of course, her beloved dog drops dead at the same moment. Agnes's father must be saved from the machination of his partner, so Mr. Micawber, of all people, must sedulously find proof of all the partners' crimes. All the shrewd criticism offered by the author of the Micawber routine of debt and misery cannot hide the fact that the financial and professional side of the novel is itself Micawberish. Something always turns up at the last moment. And all the criticism of Dora's feathery self-centredness cannot hide the fact that the book's emotional life is largely Doraish. Difficulties and dangers disappear like mist; and their main function seems to be to give that quickened sense of joy and relief which follows their miraculous removal.

"These facts are clear; but it is not easy to assess them. The design of the book seems to be, first, to give a highly coloured vision of life through innocent eye of childhood, and then to show the slow impact of reality and adult standards on this vision. But the balance between the two parts is never achieved. The mature David is at times hardly more than an overgrown childish David; and the author connives at his immaturity by giving so many of his dreams a solid substance afterwards. At fist, the fairy-tale atmosphere is appropriate, but the fact is bound to be spoilt when it creeps in unexpectedly in deliberately mature passages.

"I suppose it is true to say that a fairy-story should be either very native or very sophisticated. It should be either Mrs. Molesworth's *Cuckoo Clock* or Thomas Mann's *Holy Sinner*. Dickens, already in the process of developing into a great artist at this time, yet retained to the day of his death some extremely childish feelings and opinions. He was not the man to achieve either type of excellence. But one quality needed by the writer of fairy-tales he did have in super-abundant measure—the brooding imaginative force, which can endow material objects with domestic life. He could live among his own creations. This faculty, which no one, perhaps, has ever possessed in a higher degree than Dickens, makes the book impressive and memorable despite all its fault. Moreover, the occasional touches of true psychological insight (like the explanation why Micawber never borrowed money from David) stand out from the fairy-tales in splendid relief".

—A. O. J. Cockshut : *The Imagination of Charles Dickens.*

17. REALISM IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

"*David Copperfield*, I suppose, has a claim to be his best work of art if we look for unity of narrations, development and, above all, that sense of intermingled comedy and tragedy, laughter and tears, and so on, that Tolstoy has set up as the norm of great of great realism. Yet I cannot really think that *David Copperfield* for all its excellencies is great in the sense of *Anna Karenina*. This sort of vivid, life-acceptant realism has always the danger or flattering that somewhat smug acceptance of life that is called 'middle-brow'. I think that in *David Copperfield*, after the childhood scene, and especially in the character of David himself, Dickens comes nearer to this sort of complacency, so much more adult than his sentimentalism, yet to my mind so much less immediately effective. *David Copperfield* on the whole avoids melodramatics, but it does not entirely avoid the awful 'sweet wisdom' that can be so nauseating in Thackeray; indeed, the character o David is dangerously close to that of Arthur Pendennis. The fabricated nostalgia that hangs around happy memories of Dr. Strong's academy, though less embarrassing, to the sophisticated reader than much about Little Nell or Tom Pinch, is, I believe, less sincere and therefore finally more embarassing the obsessive preoccupation with innocence. Steerforth alone and all the scenes that concern him seem to break through the padded comfort of the book".

—Angus Wilson : *Charles Dickens—A Haunting* (1960)

18. REALISM IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

"When we speak of psychological fiction, we generally, mean the use of probing methods, like introspection or analysis; or we mean enveloping techniques, like point of view and stream of consciousness, which stimutate the flow of inner conflict. But there is another kind of fiction, the projective novel, in which surface life reflects the inner self. *David Copperfield* belongs to that tradition. As the hero views the world, his feelings fuse with outward action, and his selection of events advances inward meaning. Franz Kafka saw this when he called *America* his Dickens Novel in method and detail. By method he apparently meant the dream-effects in *Copperfield*, the infantile perspective on a world controlled by elders, and the hero's progress through that world toward ultimate redemption. As Kafka knew, the childlike view connects unconscious tensions with the conscious scene. Because the child lacks self-awareness, and because he fails to understand his elders, his bafflement aligns two realms of feelings; and in a world of harsh repression, his need for inner growth becomes directive and informing".

—Mark Spilka : *David Copperfield As psychological Fiction* (1959).

19. FANTASY IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

"When Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*, he was in a sound position to take stock of the past and to face the bogies of his childhood and adolescence. His fame was established; the slight setback he had suffered at

the time of *Martin Chuzzlewit* was forgotten. He was an institution; he was prosperous; and he had recently, in *Dombey and Son,* taken, a big step on the path which was to make him a great artist as well. The extreme personal reticence and the touchiness of the past now seemed to him out of place. He was ready to tell his own story. Or was he ?

"Perhaps not altogether. It is obvious, of course, that emotional identification of Dickens with David, is very strong ; and his readers were clearly encouraged to be aware of a close analogy between them. Trivial clues, like the use of his own initials in reverse, were interwoven into a more straight-forward identification of careers. David, like Dickens, was a parliamentary reporter, who became a literary man. Dickens, like all great artists, had a way of fulfilling a number of desperate alms atonce. And if he wanted to unburden himself of his secrets, and to present himself in a favourable light, he also knew very well that his devoted public were longing to know more about the personality and experience behind the mask of Boz : an autobiographical novel would increase his sales. But if Dickens had a strong urge to speak publicly of his life and hard times, he also had an urge to falsify them. He could never quite come to terms with his father's disgrace as a debtor, or his own 'de classing' in the blacking factory. Hence, his actual accounts of these things, and his fictional variations upon them in *David Copperfield* are alike characterised by an excessive emotional instability. He oscillated betweeen indignation, self-pity, and reticence of the stiff upper-lip English school. He was moved successively or even simultaneously by a desire to be admired for his extraordinary triumph over circumstances, a desire to be pitied as a childish outcast, and a desire to appear as a gentleman to whom education and literary culture came as a birthright. All these impulses were reflected in *David Copperfield* and as they are incompatible, and also, as Dickens realised when he faced them squarely, not very signified emotions, it is not surprising that at times a heavy sentimental smoke screen was needed. For a writer, with these devious ends in view, or rather, not exactly in view but half concealed from himself, the advantages of the form of *David Copperfield* are obvious. He could speak in the first person, and enjoy all the pleasures of sentimental reminiscence. He could put in enough obvious clues to convince even his dullest readers that the book had a connection with his own life. He could give his hero a recent history corresponding to his own; he could repeat in *David Copperfield* the facts about himself that everybody knew, for instance, the fact that he had been a parliamentary reporter. He could thus without telling any untruth, cause the public to assume that the earlier scenes also were drawn from his own experience. So indeed, at the emotional level, many of them were, but there were also a good many convenient alterations of fact, and some false trails.

"The key question about *David Copperfield*—and there is no satisfactory answer to it—is "How far did he exercise his early fantasies by examining them calmly from a mature point of view and how far did he

bolster up old fantasies and create new ones by adding new fuel to the fire of his self-pity ?" So far as book's deliberate plan goes, of course, great care is taken to present David's childish and adolescent naivety from a distance through mature adult eyes. Passages like this reveal such an intention clearly.

"I suppose history never lies, does it ?" said Mr. Dick, with a gleam of hope.

"Oh, dear, no, Sir !" I replied most decisively. I was ingenious and young and I thought so.

"But illusions like this are amiable failings and cost no effort to recall and admit. The criticism of David comes to the author's personality when he is shown as a born actor, revelling in the tragic impression he is able to make on his school-fellows at the time of his mother's death, or in his treatment as a budding young lawyer, of Barkis's will.

"I felt myself quite a proctor when I read this document aloud with all possible ceremony, and set forth its provisions any number of times when they concerned. I began to think there was more in the Commons than I had supposed. I examined the will with the deepest attention, pronounced it perfectly formal in all respects, made or so in the margin, and thought it rather extraordinary that I knew so much".

"The mockery which the mature David directs at his love for Dora is again something that need not have cost Dickens much. David's absurdity here is amiable, and , vastly exaggerated, though it is derived from a very common experience, to which it is no shame to confess. Even so, the self-mockery misfires a little. In the first place, he is a great deal more severe on the self-centred feminine immaturity of Dora than he is on his own failings on Dora's dreaminess. David's talk of a "crus" well earned by stipulating that her dog must have his mutton-chop every day punctually at twelve. David's forbearance in the face of this leaves us strongly biased in his favour. While the pseudo-literary romanticism of Miss Mill's journal ("Must not D.C. confide himself to the broad opinions of time ?" etc) makes David seem by far the most sensible of the three.

"When David does smile at his own calf-love, an uneasy facetious tone creeps in, and tends to inhibit any serious criticism : "Red Whisker pretended that he could make a salad (which I didn't believe), and obtruded himself on public notice. Some of the young ladies washed the lettuces for him, and sliced them under his direction. Dora was among these, I felt that fate had pitted me against this man, and one of us must fall". This sort of treatment might lead us to think that adolescent jealousy was part of an amusing game. David's faults can be put down to a romantic immaturity. The self-criticism has no sting".

—A. O. J. Cockshut : *The Imagination of Charles Dickens.*

20. CHARACTERISATION IN DAVID COPPERFIELD

Intimately, indeed, did Dickens know the middle class, he was bone

of its bone and flesh of its flesh. Intimately he knew its bringing up. With the hand of a master he has drawn for us a type of the teachers and trainers of its youth, a type of its places of education. Mr. Creakle and Salem House are immortal. The type itself, it is to be hoped will perish; but the drawing of it which Dickens has given cannot die. Mr. Creakle, the stout gentleman with a bunch of watch chain and seals, in an arm-chair, with the fiery face and thick veins in his forehead. Mr. Creakle sitting at his breakfast with the cane, and a newspaper, and the buttered toast before him, will sit on, like Theseus, for ever. For ever will last the recollection of Salem House, and of 'the daily strife and struggle' there .....

We may even go further still in our use of that charming and instructive book, the History of David Copperfield. We may lay our finger there on the very types in adult life which are the natural product of Salem House and of Mr. Creakle the very types of our middle class, nay of Englishmen and the English nature in general, as to the Irish imagination they appear. We have only to recall, on the one hand, Mr. Murdstone may be called the natural product of a course of Salem House and of Mr. Creakle, acting upon hard, stern and narrow natures. Let us recall, then, Mr. Murdstone; Mr. Murdstone with his firmness and severity, with his austere religion and his tremendous visage in church; with his view of the world as 'a place for action; and not for moping and droning in; his view of young Copperfield's disposition as "requiring a great deal of correcting, and to which no greater service can be done than to force it to conform to the ways of the working world, and to bend it and break it. We may recall too Miss Murdstone, his sister,with the same religion, the same tremendous visage in church, the same firmness; Miss Murdstone with her 'hard steel purse' and her 'uncompromising hard back boxes with her initials on the lids in hard black nails; severe and formidable like her brother, 'whom she greatly resembled in face and voice'. These two people, with their hardness, their narrowness, their want of consideration for other people's feelings, their inability to enter into them, are just the type of the Englishmen and his civilisation as he presents himself to the Irish mind by his serious side. His energy, firmness, industry, religion, exhibit themselves with these unpleasant features; his bad qualities exhibit themselves without mitigation or relief".

Mathew Arnold

20
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

Q.1. "Dickens is not only the most famous of the Victorian novelists, he is also the most typical". Discuss.

Or

"Dickens, in his merits and in his defects, is the typical Victorian novelist". Discuss.

Or

Examine with special reference to *David Copperfield* the view that Dickens is a slave to convention.

INTRODUCTION

Dickens is a representative novelist of the Victorian age. His novels represent most of the merits and demerits of Victorian novel. He shares the likes and dislikes, prejudices and favours, of the writers of his age. In the words of S. D. Neill, "Dickens is immortal because he is essentially of his time". G. K. Chesterton observes : "Dickens did not write what the people wanted. Dickens wanted what the people wanted .... Dickens never talked down to the people. He talked up to the people. He approached the people like a deity and poured out his riches and his blood. This is what makes immortal bond between him and the masses of men". *David Cecil* rightly remarks : "Dickens is not only the most famous of the Victorian Novelists, he is also the most typical".

SLAVE TO CONVENTION

The Victorian novel is characterised by a number of limitations. The main demerits of the Victorian novels are their loose plots, false sentiment, melodrama, wooden characters, love of the romance, conventional characterization, conservative attitude towards sex, indifference to art and politics, lack of deep philosophy. All these faults are found in the novels of Dickens. Their stories consist of a large variety of characters and incidents clustering round the figure of a hero, bound together more or less loosely by an intrigue and ending with the ringing of marriage-bells. Dickens is a slave to this convention. In his novels also there is mistaken identity, long-lost heirs; and the other paraphernalia of romance. In *David Copperfield,* for example there is the intrigue of Uriah Heep, and the novel ends with the marriage of David and Agnes who live happily ever afterwards.

INORGANIC PLOTS

The plots of the Victorian novels are not organic wholes. All their

incidents ane characters do not form integral parts of the plot. Dickens' novels also suffer from this weakness. In *David Copperfield*, many characters and incidents are superfluous. Some of the characters are irrelevant. They cannot be linked with the main plot of the novel. The novel is popular because of its charming episode and individuality of characters. The novel, however, lacks unity of tone which is essential in a good novel.

EXCESS OF PATHOS AND MELODRAMA

The Victorian novels are melodramatic. A melodrama is a source of entertainment. It gives us a thrill, a sensation but it fails to arouse the emotions of pity and terror. David Cecil says, "There is hardly a book of Dickens which is not deformed false sentiment, flashy melodrama .... Moreover, this melodrama is wedged in between solid blocks of reality and in this way unity of tone is spoiled".

Similarly, Dickens is unable to create a truly pathetic situation. He tries to overdo the whole thing to entertain the reader. He tries to heighten the pathetic situation by the addition of foreign manners. His efforts to create a tragic situation aré spoiled by his ridiculous exaggeration. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens tries to create a pathetic situation at the time of little Emily's elopement but he is not successful.

CONSCIENCE OF THE AGE

Dickens was the conscience of the Victorian age. The strong moralising note in his novels represents the Victorian outlook towards life—the virtues are rewarded and vices punished. The melodramatic background and situations in his novels are also Victorian; Victorian optimism is reflected in the happy endings of his novels—Pip and David Copperfield ultimately win the battle of life successfully.

NO CRITICISM OF MORAL CODES

The Victorians were averse to criticism of their values of life. Dickens never challenged the foundations of the structure of their society or moral codes, he merely showed the external manifestations of the evils inherent in the Victorian society, instead of recommending any solution to the socio-economic problems (otherwise it would have wounded the feelings of the Victorian reading-public who were very much confident of their 'progressive' and 'prosperous' society) he tried to evoke the sense of charity and benevolence'. He never expected that his readers would think over any problem he might raise in his novels, therefore he appealed to their feeling. His novels suffer from excessive sentimentality because they abound in the illustrations of emotional appeal.

NO PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERS

The Victorians were much fascinated by the externals of life; they never cared for going into the innermost aspect of reality. Dickens like other Victorians, observed the outward features of objects; while pointing out the peculiarities of a character, he marked only the external behaviour—

dress, action or utterance of words. He observes idiosyncrasies of his characters, but he does not analyse their inner world. We do not find in his novels any character of introspective temperament like Lord Jim in his world.

SEX AS A TABOO

The hypocrite Victorians held sex to be a taboo. Even talking about sex was immoral to them. Before the Bronte Sisters there is no mention of sex in the Victorian novels. Dickens has never touched this aspect of life in any of his novels. Whenever he describes the man-woman relationship, he verges on emotionalism or sentimentalism rather than a true picture of life. Like most Victorians, Dickens was anxious to improve the world in his own way; he detested frivolity and sexual licence, especially in literature. Like the people of his own age, he also desired to impose his own clearcut prejudices on them. He also shared the limitations of his public; like his readers, he was a petty bourgeois; like them he allied quickness of native wit, keen observation and sentimentality to an interest in external characteristics. Like so many of his readers he was a man of the town, of the New London. He was an average nineteenth century cockney; but he had genius.

LIMITED RANGE OF CHARACTERISATION

The range of characterisation in Victorian novel is limited. Victorian novelist, instead of showing their interest in human nature, only reveal oddities and eccentricities of characters. They fail to create great artists, intellectuals, politicians or men of religion in their novels. They do not seem to be interested in the deeper issues of life. Dickens' novels also suffer from these limitations. He has not created even a single gentleman or a great intellectual. He has given us caricatures, not characters.

MIRROR OF VICTORIAN SOCIETY

Dickens was a typical Victorian in another sense. He is a representative novelist of his age, that is to say, his novels are the mirrors, the pictures of the society of his day. His novels present the panorama of the whole society. A street in London as described by Dickens is certainly a street in London. As Hugh Walker points out, he is the romancer of London life, and his romance is founded on reality. During Dickens life-time dramatic changes took place. Electricity, railways, grey architecture, Industrial Revolution were all the products of his age. And his books mirrored the whole transformation. It was the Industrial England of grim cities where the poor died which became the theme of his novels. London, worn out by hardship and despair of its people, eclipsed by drudgery and squalor, echoed itself fully in his novels.

CONCLUSION

To conclude in the words of S. D. Neil, "Dickens is the Victorian age in fiction, or a large part ot it. He shared its faults of taste, its love of

melodrama, its exuberant vitality, its belief in the sharp division of humanity into sheep and goats. He shared innate humour of the period. His novels, humour apart, are morality plays in which the good angels win the battle for the soul of man, which is just what the majority of the Victorian were sure they would".

Q. 2. Discuss Charles Dickens as a social reformer.

Or

Dickens was "that rare type of reformer who could moralise with a smile on his lips, and mix his sermonic powders in such excellent jam that his contemporaries did not realize for a while that he was doctoring them for their good". Discuss.

INTRODUCTION

Dickens was a great social-reformer. But he was not a propagandist like Shaw. Nor was he a professional social reformer. Whatever social reforming zeal is found in his works is the artist's zeal to present evil existing in society. Dickens was primarily a great story-teller and entertainer. At the same time, he used the medium of fiction to expose the social and economic evils of the Victorian age. Compton Rickett says that Dickens "was not merely a story teller but a social reformer who used fiction as a platform for his social appeals; and who proved to be that rare type of reformer who could moralise with a smile on his lips and mix his sermonic powers in such excellent jam, that his contemporaries did not realise for a while that he was doctoring them for their good".

CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTORIAN AGE

The Victorian age was known for its social unrest and scientific advancement. It was an age of political awakening and industrial prosperity. It had its problems of poverty and squalor. It was known for its humanitarianism. The Industrial Revolution created a class of prosperous capitalists who exploited the ill-clad and ill-fed workers. Prices of food rose and consequenlty there was famine. English laws were very severe. Petty crimes could lead to death sentence. The sanitary condition in British jails was dreadful.

HIS METHOD

Dickens could not remain impervious to the dominant features of the contemporary society. In many ways, he was a typical Victorian. He saw the social, political, economic, and educational shortcomings of the Victorian society and criticised them through humour and satire in his novels. He did not attack society directly with cudgels in his hands. On the contrary, he did it with a smile on his lips. He tried to arouse the public conscience to the evils rampant in the Victorian society, so that healthy reforms could be introduced, with goodwill towards all and malice towards none. He had no faith in the power of sermonizing. Nor did he believe in the effectiveness of

legal machinery. He realized that no real improvement could be introduced through Parliamentary legislation, or by the use of revolutionary methods. The public itself must be made aware of the weaknesses and the need to try and get out of them. This he aimed at achieving through his novels.

VARIOUS ILL OF VICTORIAN AGE

Dickens was a great humanitarian. He used his pen for the amelioration of the miserable and pathetic conditions of the poor factory-workers, little children groaning under the whips of tyrannical school-masters, litigants moving about law-courts without getting any justice, and prisons subjected to the hardships of rigorous prison-life. In his novels, he attacked the injustices of the poor law, delays in administration of justice, the cruelties of school-masters, imprisonment for debts and so on.

CHILD LABOUR

In his novels Dickens shows the evils of the Industrial Revolution as a result of which many children, who should have been at school, were put to hard factory-labour. In *David Copperfield,* he described how David was sent to work at Murdstone and Grinby's when he was only ten years old, to earn his living of six or seven shillings a week. Though he was quite an intelligent boy, ambitious to be highly educated and refined, all his hopes were nipped in the bud because his own mother had died, and his step father decided not to spend on his education. The tale of David is in fact the tale of many helpless children who were similarly reduced to the position of mere working hands at a tender age because of the unjust social and economic distinctions existing in the society.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The educational system in contemporary England was also defective. In *David Copperfield,* we are told that schools in those days were run by cruel heartless people like Mr. Creakle and the one-legged Tungay who believed in the maxim of 'spare the rod and spoil the child' and beat children frequently, while on their own part they were incapable of real teaching. On the other hand, scholars like, Mr. Mell were insulted and sacked by their heartless masters, just because of their poverty. They were exploited by people like Mr. Creakle for their own selfish interests. These schools aimed at profiteering rather than educating. Dickens has presented his idea of a good school in the form of Dr. Strong's-Academy.

MISERABLE CONDITIONS IN PRISONS

The need for prison-reform has been stressed through pictures of the squalor and dirt, drinking and gambling, sorrow and suffering of prison-life, which are scattered all over his works. In *David Copperfield,* there is the realistic picture of King's Bench Prison for debtors. Prisoners were treated like dumb, driven cattle, more like wild beasts than human-beings. The aim was to inflict social vengeance on them, rather than to reform them. Dirt, disease and death were the common lot of the prisoners.

Conditions in prison-ships called hulks, were even more appalling. We get a glimpse of the life in the hulks in *Great Expectations* and the picture is horrible in the extreme. Through such pictures, Dickens's aim was to awaken the conscience of his age.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Abuses of the legal system, and delays in the meeting out of justice are also criticised by Dickens in *David Copperfield*. In the novel, we get a detailed account of the working of the courts of the Doctors Common and their abuses. He has a first-hand knowledge of the legal system of the country. Through the pictures of legal people such as Spenlow and Jorkins, he has represented the selfishness of the legal machinery. They have entered the profession to earn money and they freely exploit the ignorance of the people to further their own ends.

DICKENS' REMEDY

Dickens's remedy for various social evils is private benevolence. He distrusts legislation or revolution. He has no faith in charitable institutions. His saviour of the poor is man of heavy purse and large heart, who gives money to the poor, finds employment for them, and makes surprise gifts to the sick and the suffering, or doubles the salary of a poor clerk. Betsey Trotwood, generous and kind-hearted, brings relief to David and helps him to get education and a suitable career. She also takes care of Mr. Dick and the way in which she treats him is recommended by Dickens for the treatment of lunatics, instead of the conventional treatment in the asylums. Dickens shows that good heart can be found in the rich and the poor alike. But it depends not on the class of the people but on the individual himself.

NOT A PIONEER

A remarkable point about Dickens as a reformer is that he was not the first to launch a systematic attack on the social evils of his day. He was not the first to draw attention to them. He was not a pioneer; in fact, he never claimed to be one. Humphry House, in his book *The Dickens World*, comments :

> He seemed topical to thousands : he was not too topical for them to see the point, nor too advanced to have the public conscience on his side. Detached now from his time he may seem more original and adventurous than he was; for them he was only giving wider publicity in 'inimitable form to a number of social facts and social abuses which had already been recognised if not explored before him. He shared a great deal of common experience with his public, so that it could gratefully and proudly say, "How true !" He so exploited his knowledge that the public recognised its master in knowing; but he also shared with it an attitude to what they both knew, and caught

exactly the tone which clarified and reinforced the public's sense of right and wrong and flattered its moral feelings.

LACK OF INTELLECTUAL STRAIN

Dickens' zeal for social reform has been criticised by critics on the ground that there is lack of intellectual strength in his writings. He appears to be rather superficial. The social evils are symptomatic of some hidden malady, something basically wrong with the system. Dickens does not care to investigate this malady. An eminent critic writes,

"The pity is that this giant never grew up intellectually. Whenever he touches upon social reform or anywhere begins to think, he falls below the level of second rate but the generous indignation that he shows is worthy of a fully and complete man". However, such a misunderstanding arises by not treating Dickens primarily as an artist. He was mainly expressing the conscience of his age through his novels. He expressed for his readers what they themselves thought and felt about the social problems of the day, but could not express clearly and frankly. That was why he became the master of their smiles and tears, a novelist whom they could not read without the most ready sympathy.

CONCLUSION

Thus it is true that besides being a moralist and novelist, Dickens was a great social reformer. He used fiction as a platform for arousing social conscience against the contemporary evils. In almost all his novels, whether sad or humorous, he laid his finger on the drawbacks and evils of Victorian society. His chief merit as a social reformer lies in the fact that he could moralise with a smile on his hips, and mix his sermonic powders in such excellent jam, that his contemporaries did not realise for a while that he was doctoring them for their good.

●

Q. 3. Write a note on Dickens' treatment of female characters.

Or

Write a critical note on Dickens' treatment of love and marriage in *David Copperfield*. Do you agree with the opinion that sexual love is totally beyond his range ?

INTRODUCTION

Dickens' female characters are usually considered to be feeble and artificial. He, however, has presented a rich gallery of foolish, ridiculous and eccentric women. he has given a very realistic portrayal of such women. Dickens puts into their mouths the every language which he must have often heard them speak. Dickens had the ability to reproduce what he saw with admirable fidelity. That is why he could present such marvellous word-pictures.

LOWER MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN

Dickens draws his female characters mostly from lower middle class.

They are often uneducated, unintelligent, quarrelsome and imbecile. They are treated kindly by their men folk. Such women appear ridiculous and are a source of laughter. Mrs. Gummidge in *David Copperfield* serves as a perfect foil to Peggotty. She suffers herself and causes suffering to her benefactors. She suffers from frequent fits of depression and irritation. Peggotty, on the other hand, is a source of inspiration and a model of sincerity. Mrs. Crupp who looks after David's chambers is an embodiment of dishonesty and uncleanliness. She is monstrously and ludicrously pretentions. Mrs. Joe Gargery and Mrs. Nickelby are other examples of the uneducated, shrewish and irresponsible type of women.

ECCENTRIC WOMEN

Dickens has successfully created a number of eccentric women. Miss Betsey Trotwood is a memorable eccentric women of Dickens who lives for ever in our mind's eye. She spends her time in chasing donkeys who happen to enter her lawn. Her hatred of donkeys is on obsession noticed in old maids. In spite of disappointment in her married life, she does not lose the innate goodness and kindness of her nature. Of course, she prefers girls to boys. But basically she is woman of good sense and helping nature. Her sound advice to David never to be mean, false and cruel reveals her good sense.

MARRIAGEABLE MAIDENS

Dickens has presented several marriageable maidens in his novels. They smile and shed tears. They are true to life. They are ioveable. They have their individual traits. Little Emily is a typical country lass carried away by the lure of romantic love. Dora is a simple innocent girl ignorant of all the dark side of life.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Dickens describes love and marriage but his novels suffer from a lack of love-making. He does not have the ability to portray women in love, All types of love—that of a father for his daughter, a mother for her son, a brother for his sister and *vice-versa*—are successfully described by Dickens in his novels. But when it comes to the physical side of a man's love for a woman or a woman's love for a man, he is a complete failure. He can describe only sexless love. There are many romantic situations in his novels but his heroes and heroines involved in these situations do not behave as if they were made of flesh and blood.

PORTRAYAL OF LOVE

Dickens' lovers appear to be personification of certain theories. Emily is an innocent girl obsessed with the dream of becoming a 'lady', Steerforth is a charming villain who uses his polished manners ro seduce the innocent Emily. All the possibilities of beautiful romantic interviews between the two, their journey across Europe and their separation have been wasted. The whole episode has been told in a hopeless manner. Similarly Dickens fails in describing David-Dora romance. It is described

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in an unnatural and artificial manner. Dickens has to resort to chance to facilitate their union. David wooes and weds Dora as if she were a butterfly. Dickens again fails to exploit the possibilities of David Agnes episode. Dickens' heroines do not seem to be creatures of flesh and blood.

NO PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF LOVERS' MIND

Dickens fails in his treatment of love. Physical charms of women seem to have no appeal for him. His knowledge of the working of female heart seems to be inadequate. Psycho-analysis of the minds of his heroines is conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps he is too occupied in creating scenes of humour and pathos to analyse the tragic reality of the futile passion of a jilted lover. Compton-Ricket rightly observes, "The tragedy of sensitive ill-used children is a tragedy that Dickens could draw with force, tenderness, and imaginative insight; but the tragedy of love, the tragedy of fitful passion, of futile affection, the tragedy of Juliet, of Maggie Tulliver, of Jess is altogether outside his range".

PORTYAYAL OF MARRIAGE

Dickens analyses marriage from different possible angles. First of all we learn about the hopeless marriage of Aunt Betsey and David's mother. Aunt Betsey has a blackmailing husband who appears at every odd moment to squeeze money out of her. David's mother contracts a foolish marriage with a ruthless man like Murdstone. David's marriage with Dora is a tragic failure. David's marriage with Dora, Aunt Betsey's marriage, Mrs. Strong's infatuation for Jack Maldon are impulsive. Mr. Murdstone's marriage with Clara Copperfield and Uriah Heep's ambition of marrying Agnes have mercenary motives. David's marriage with Agnes, Peggotty's marriage with Barkis and Traddles' marriage with Sophy are prudent marriages. Perhaps Dickens wants to say that thoughtful and prudent marriages lead to happiness, while impulsive and mercenary marriages lead to domestic trouble.

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Q. 4. Write a note on 'poetic justice' in *David Copperfield*.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'poetic justice' is often used in connection with literary creations. It represents the idea that the good are ultimately rewarded and the evil punished. Though life does not seem to have such a convenient arrangement and we often see some very bad people prospering and good people suffering privations, critics expect that a writer should conclude his work by rewarding the characters who are essentially good and punishing the villains. In the opinion of such critics, literature has the primary function of preaching good moral principles. They believe that 'poetic justice' in literature will inspire virtuous people to continue their good conduct and deter evil persons from their nefarious practices.

DICKENS—A MORALIST

Dickens was a moralist. He believed in the theory that literature should administer 'poetic justice'. His novels are comparable with morality plays. In all his novels the good always triumph over the wicked. Honesty, sincerity in love, piety, persistent practice of virtue ultimately pay adequate dividends though only after a long struggle.

'POETIC JUSTICE' IN 'DAVID COPPERFIELD'

In *'David Copperfield'* too, the good are ultimately rewarded and the wicked punished suitably. It is the story of David Copperfield, a boy who rises from rags to riches. A posthumous child, tortured by his step-father, he runs away from his uncongenial surroundings, perseveres persistently and ultimately becomes a famous and prosperous author. The other characters can also be divided in two categories, the good and the bad. The good eventually are rewarded with happiness and the bad are punished with premature death or imprisonment.

GOOD CHARACTERS

Mr. Peggotty is an upright fisherman ignorant of the ways of the world. He suffers acute mental anguish as a result of the cunning seduction of Little Emily, his adopted daughter, by Steerforth. He wanders all over in search of her and suffers in various ways. At last Mr. Peggotty recovers Emily, emigrates with her to Australia where he leads a happy and contented life. The honest man is thus rewarded for his virtue.

Mr. Micawber is a talented man but his poverty stands in the way. Having no fixed income, he supports his family by borrowing money. He is even imprisoned and sent to debtors' prison on account of his inability to repay his debts in time. Afterwards he works as a confidential clerk under Uriah Heep and discovers the latter's fraudulent business dealings. He shows great courage in exposing Uriah Heep at the earliest opportunity. His exposure of Uriah Heep earns him the regard and assistance of Miss Betsey Trotwood. He is sent to Australia where he becomes a colonial magistrate.

Mr. Mell, a teacher at Salem House is a gentle soul who suffers from poverty. He is insulted and dismissed for this reason. In the end he too is seen leading a happy life in Australia.

Agnes Wickfield is the noblest character in the novel. She suffers much as a result of Mr. Wickfield's weakness and Heep's villaing. He sincerely and devotedly loves David Copperfield who fails to understand her true love. She is ultimately happily married to David.

BAD CHARACTERS

Villains like Uriah Heep, Steerforth, and Littimer are meted out suitable punishment in the novel. Uriah Heep is the most villainous character in the novel. He pretends humility, but he cheats Mr. Wickfield, takes charge of his business and has designs on Agnes. His villainy is exposed by Mr. Micawber. In the end, he is seen as a prisoner in a model prison.

Steerforth is the spoilt son of an aristocratic family. Having lost his father early in life, he was fondled and pampered by an overindulgent mother who spoilt him beyond redemption. Snobbish and arrogant he looks at the poor with disdain. He poses as a patron of the young and innocent David. he insults his teacher Mr. Mell and becomes instrumental in his dismissal. He shows little concern for the emotional disturbance he causes to others—Rosa Dartle and Peggotty family. He ruins their peace of mind and causes incalculable havoc in their life by seducing Emily. In the end he is drowned in a shipwreck near Yarmouth.

Q. 5. Describe briefly the legal profession as depicted in '*David Copperfield*'.

INTRODUCTION

Dickens had close relation with the legal profession. He was personally interested in it. He himself had studied law. That is why there is a great deal of interest shown in the legal profession by Dickens in his novels. In *David Copperfield* also, there is a reference to it when David goes to Spenlow and Jorkins for his apprenticeship as a proctor.

DAVID'S DECISION TO ENTER LEGAL PROFESSION

It is on the suggestion of his aunt Betsey that David takes up the legal profession. He himself does not know much about this profession. So he takes the advice of his friend Steerforth in this regard. The difference between advocates and proctors was that the former were civilians who had taken a Doctor's degree at a college, and the latter employed the services of the advocates. Both secured comfortable fees and earned a good income.

In order to enter the profession, one had to pay a high premium of around a thousand pounds as we learn from David's case. One was then put on a period of probation of six months or so, during which time one could decide whether to continue or not.

DOCTOR'S COMMONS

We come to know from *David Copperfield* that the federal courts were held in Doctors' Commons. The Doctors' Commons was a court which had jurisdiction over wills and marriages, and disputes about ships and boats. It administered ecclesiastical laws also. The courts of law those days were like the playgrounds to play several innings of a match. If you lost in one you could go in the other. The same lawyers practised in every court, but there was a difference of judge.

Describing the court itself, Dickens tells us that it was held in a large, dull room which reminded one of a chapel. On the two sides of the court was a raised platform, in the shape of a horse-shoe. Doctors sat on old dining-room chairs. They wore red gowns and wigs. The presiding judge who was generally an old person, had a small desk before him which looked very much like the pulpit desk. Seated in dark dungeon and blinking over

his desk, he looked very much like an owl. On the lower floor, just below the judges, sat gentlemen of Mr. Spenlow's rank. They were all stiffly dressed in black gowns with white furs, and sat behind large green table. In the centre of the court stood a stove, with all the people who had some business to transact, sitting around it and warming themselves. This gave a cozy look to the otherwise old-fashioned, time-forgotten court. It was a dreary place, reminding one of a sleepy-headed little family party for the stay of the old-fashioned gentlemen.

RESPECTABLE PROFESSION

The novel also tells us that the legal profession was considered as one of the respectable professions, and meny young people aspired to enter it. Uriah Heep, for example, was an ordinary clerk in Mr. Wickfield's firm, but his ambition was to master the intricacies of law. He used to study law books, especially, Tidd's *Practice,* till late in the evening, because he wanted to rise in that field. Law also required a knowledge of Latin, and David offered to teach Uriah Latin in order to help him with his study of law. But Uriah used law for worst means to cheat and forge others. But there were some others who used law for the betterment of others. Mr. Micawber gathered some knowledge of law while working with Uriah Heep but he made use of it for the good of others. So did Traddles. Later on, Mr. Micawber became a magistrate.

Law and banking were closely connected, and people like Mr. Wickfield had to learn law in order to deal with their business clients successfully.

SATIRE ON LEGAL PROFESSION

In *David Copperfield,* Dickens has satirized the legal profession and exposes its hollowness and weaknesses. He has caricatured it and shown the selfishness and heartlessness of the people engaged in it. Mr. Spenlow does not return Miss Betsey's money although she has become poor. Further, law can be manipulated by selfish people to their own advantage. Knowledge of legal intricacies and ability to manipulate them was thus essential for anyone desirous of true justice. Similarly, Miss Betsey and Mr. Wickfield would have lost everything had not people like David, Traddles and Mr. Micawber, all belonging to the legal profession, come to their assistance.

Thus, we see that Dickens has drawn a very real and true picture of Law and legal courts of his time in England.

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Q. 6. Write a critical note on the combination of realism and fantasy in *David Copperfield.*

Or

"*David Copperfield* is a novel with an artistic mingling of facts and fancy", Discuss.

Or

"Dickens is a great novelist only by virtue of his imagination". Discuss.

Or

Discuss *David Copperfield* as a fairy tale.

FUSION OF FACT AND FICTION

The English novel before Dickens had either sought for romance in the lives of highwaymen or in haunted ruins and Gothic Castles. Scott had cast over it the romantic glow of a remote time and place. In Dickens's hands, the English novel returns once again to real, contemporary life. London, and the life of the lower middle-class or the lower classes of London is the subject of Dickens's novels. It was this life with which he had been familiar since his childhood and it is this life which he portrays in his novels. But his is not a mere photographic reporting. Reality is his subject, but reality is heightened and glorified by the magic wand of his creative imagination. It is in this way that the common is made to look uncommon and unfamiliar. There is thus a free mingling of realism and romance, fact and fiction, truth and fantasy in his novels. His novels thus do not create the impression of reality, though they contain many realistic touches. A few examples would serve to illustrate the point.

IMAGINATIVE HEIGHTENING OF REALITY

Reality is the basis of Dickens's art. In one novel after another, as in *David Copperfield* also, he depicts contemporary London. Its squares, its busy thoroughfares, its noise and squalor, its obscure dwellings, its dirty over crowded slums, the neat and tidy cottages of its suburbs, have all been painted vividly and in detail. It is, no doubt, reality, but reality is coloured and beautified by the prismatic glow of his imagination. He is, as Hugh Walker points out, "the romancer of London streets and slums". There is constant ordering and selection of material, till we get a heightened and idealised picture of reality. It is in this way that he discovers beauty in ugliness, and good in evil things. The crude and the coarse is thus softened, and the more pleasant aspects are emphasized. There is no falsification of reality; what we get from him is still reality, but a reality transformed and heightened by the power of his imagination.

EXAGGERATION OF PERSONAL ODDITIES AND WHIMS

Dickens's fantastic imagination fastens upon human oddities, whims, or eccentricities and exaggerates them. Many of his characters have been drawn from real human beings, but their peculiarities of dress, manner or speech have been much exaggerated, so that they look different from reality. They tend to become caricatures. Thus Mr. and Mrs. Micawber have been drawn after his own parents, but where in life would we find such optimism, such shiftlessness, or such waiting for something to turn up ? The Villainy of Uriah Heep appears to be equally unconvincing and fantastic.

There is much in the novel that is autobiographical, but also much that is fictitious. As Cazamian puts it his fantastic imagination works upon reality and distorts it in the interest of the picturesque and the emotional. But it must be said to his credit that though often fictitious as to the mere event, he is inadvertently true to emotional reality. Thus David's fight from *Murdstone and Grinby* is fictitious, but all the same it is the representation of an emotional reality.

THE FAIRY-TALE ELEMENT

The fact is that in this novel, Dickens looks at the world through the eyes of a child. Now a child is prone to exaggerate; the black with him, becomes blacker, and the white becomes whiter. The real is heightened. Any harshness and callousness makes a man a very monster of cruelty, while a little kindness and sympathy make him a veritable angel in the eyes of a boy. Both good and the evil are exaggerated. Thus Steerforth becomes David's hero and Betsey Trotwood his fairy god-mother. On the other hand, the Murdstones appear to him as very Ogres, and his experiences in the *Murdstone and Grinby* have a nightmare reality. As Walter Allen points out, fairyland and the nightmare world lie close together in his novels. It is a world in which even crocodiles appear cabbages. It is a fantastic world, looked at through the eyes of a child. Hence it is that the novel has an element of the fairy tale in it. Like a fairy tale, it transports us to a world of romance, where the wonderful and the fantastic are ordinary and commonplace.

EXAGGERATION OF SOCIAL EVILS

Dickens's social purpose also comes in the way of his realism. He wanted to focus attention on the various evils of the day, and with this end in view, he habitually exaggerates them. His art is guilty of over statement. Thus the abuses of the educational system the evils of child-labour, the defects in the working of poor laws, the grinding poverty of the poor, the delay in the administration of justice, the squalor and wretchedness of the prisons, have all been over-emphasised with this end in view. His art of characterisation often suffers as a result of his social purposes, and his characters are often exaggerated, fantastic, and, in short, caricature-like. Similarly, and with this end in view, his pathos, too is, often over-done.

UNREALITY : FURTHER REASONS FOR IT

There are other reasons also which tend to make Dickens's world unreal and fantastic. In the interest of Poetic Justice, the good are always rewarded and the vicious punished in the end. Mr. Micawber becomes a successful magistrate and Mr. Mell also does well in Australia. He often interferes with the smooth flow of narrative with direct comments and moralising. In *David Copperfield*, the hero hears even the conversation which took place before his birth. Thus there is no reality in presentation. There is also abuse of co-incidence. For example, Mr. Spenlow dies

conveniently to enable David to marry Dora, and Dora herself dies to make the marriage of David with Agnes possible. His novels suggest the manipulated sequence of art, rather than the representation of unvarnished truth. *"His novels, while they contain many realistic touches, seldom create the impression of reality"*.(Long).

Q. 7. Compare and contrast the characters of Agnes Wickfield and Dora Spenlow.

INTRODUCTION

Agnes Wickfield and Dora Spenlow present an interesting study in contrast. Agnes and Dora are like two roses of different branches. Both spread their fragrance in David's life in their turn and make it happy and full. They are both beautiful, but while Dora is ravishingly beautiful, Agnes' beauty is of a quieter kind. Dora is innocence incarnated; Agnes has a bright and serene beauty like that of church stained-glass window. She spreads around her an air of serenity, purity and tranquillity. Agnes is more dignified than Dara.

DORA, EDUCATED; AGNES, WISE

Both Agnes and Dora arrest David's love. Dora arrests David's love by her sweet little laugh, her musical voice, and her childish, innocent ways. Agnes, on the other hand, is like a sister, a 'good angel', whose advice David seeks in everything he does. Agnes thus has more maturity and intelligence than Dora. Dora is more educated than Agnes, but Agnes is more wise. Dora has received her education in Paris, and she can sing French ballads, play on the guitar and dance exquisitely. Agnes, on the other hand, is deprived of formal education, but she is wellversed in domestic affairs and household responsibilities. Moreover, she reads in her spare time, and can also play on the piano. She is homely and brilliant.

AGNES EFFICIENT HOUSE-KEEPER; DORA A FAILURE

Dora is not very much experienced in house-keeping, and cannot learn cooking and keeping account in spite of her best efforts to do so after her marriage with David. She cannot control her servant, and taking advantage of her leniency and carelessness, he starts stealing things. Agnes on the other hand, is an efficient house-keeper. She has looked after the comfort and well-being of her father since her childhood because her mother had died at an early age. When David comes to live with them. Agnes looks after him too. In the words of Miss Betsey, Agnes carries a wise head on young shoulders. She has a keen sense of duty and responsibility and is devoted to her father. Not only does she look after his personal well-being, but she also takes a keen interest in the affairs of his firm and when she learns about Uriah Heep's wicked eye on Mr. Wickfield's business, she is always watchful lest any harm should be caused to her father or his business.

AGNES CALM AND COURAGEOUS; DORA EASILY ANNOYED

Agnes can face adversity boldly. When she learns of Miss Betsey's and her own father's losses through Uriah Heeps's machinations, she considers the ways and means of getting them out of this difficulty. She is firm and courageous. She advises David to take up work under Dr. Strong. Similarly, she accompanies her father to London because she fears his being alone with Uriah Heep. Dora, on the other hand, is easily annoyed. Had it not been for the help of Miss Mills, she would not have known how to proceed after her father's refusal to let the two lovers meet, and after his death and her own removal to her aunts' house at Putney. Here again the contrast is seen through Agnes's advice to David that he shoud meet Dora with the permission of her aunts, under their roof if possible. Agnes has practical insight into worldly matters.

THEIR MARRIED LIVES

In their married lives also there is a contrast. Dora's married life with David is not very happy. It is full of quarrels and misunderstandings. But Agnes's married life is an example of happiness. It is a model to others. Dora is childish; Agnes is more matured; although both are of the same age. While Dora is always ready to be advised by David, Agnes is David's trusted friend, counsellor, guide and guardian—his 'good-angel' in his own words. She is never jealous of Dora, and advises David to seek solace in nature after his severe loss. She guides him and like a bright star inspires him to rise higher and follow the path of virtue and goodness. Thus, she is the inspiration behind David's name and fame. She possesses the qualities of head and heart more than physical beauty, which make her loved by everyone.

Thus, whereas Dora symbolises Dickens's idea of women in general, Agnes represents his ideal of perfect womanhood.

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Q. 8. What treatment was meted out to *David Copperfield* by Mr. Murdstone, and how did it affect him ?

DAVID'S FIRST MEETING WITH MR. MURDSTONE

Words are often more poignant than actions. The bitter words of Mr. Murdstone, therefore, always pierced David's heart. David first met Mr. Murdstone when he was returning from church one Sunday with his mother. David did not like him; he did not like his thick black hair and whiskers and his shallow eyes. He inspired a kind of awe, and David felt that he was thinking about something very closely. David felt a kind of uneasy jealousy towards him and these feelings and impressions of the first meeting became everlasting.

MURDSTONE'S MARRIAGE WITH DAVID'S MOTHER

When David returned from his holiday at Yarmouth and realized that his mother had married Mr. Murdstone, he felt very unhappy. He realized

that Mr. Murdstone was a cruel man who believed in tyrannizing over his poor mother and him. Mr. Murdstone and his sister, the lady with a metallic look, took control of everything and became absolute despots in the house. David's only comfort, his mother, was not allowed to express her love for David. All was awe and the hard laws of discipline, firmness and tyranny.

MR. MURDSTONE'S TYRANNY

When Miss Murdstone came to live with them, she remarks, "Generally speaking, I don't like boys. How d'ye do, boy ?" And then she pointed out David's lack of manners. All these incidents were alienating David from Murdstones. But the last episode of flogging and biting put a dead stop to the relations between David and Murdstone. Their feelings were embittered beyond any hope of reconciliation. David, whenever in the presence of Mr. Murdstone could not keep his wits, he rather forgot what he knew full well. One day Mr. Murdstone determined to thrash the boy outright if he failed to learn the lesson. David as usual could not remember anything. Then Mr. Murdstone took David out into the room and twisted his head under his arm. David uselessly protested and requested Mr. Murdstone not to beat him but he cut David heavily. At the same instant David caught the hand with which he held David in his mouth, between his teeth and bit through. Thereafter, Mr. Murdstone beat him as if to death. Then David was confined in a solitary room for five days to be sent to Salem House afterwards.

DAVID SENT TO SCHOOL

Murdstone thereupon admitted David to a very sultry and cruel public school of Mr. Creakle with directions for stiff and strict treatment towards David. So in school too David was humiliated under Mr. Murdstone's directions and had to wear a placard with the inscription : "Take care of him. He bites".

BETSEY'S HELP

The cruel behaviour seemed to run the very life of David Copperfield. He was simply on the brink of destruction and would have ended miserably if Miss Betsey had not given him a helping hand. The obstimate cruelty and hatred of Mr. Murdstone for David left him quite forsaken. In Salem House, he was subjected to numerous insults but God is great. God saved David in the person of Miss Betsey. Others, such as Peggotty, Agnes, and Traddles also stand firmly on the precipice of humanity. It is but for Miss Betsey Trotwood that David's life was saved from all the miseries heaped upon him by Mr. Murdstone.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Mr. Murdstone's attitude towards David was cruel and inhuman from the very beginning. It is on account of his cruel treatment that David had to work at the tender age of ten in Murdstone and Grinby for six or seven shillings a weeks where is had to suffer untold humiliation. But Dickens believed in the ultimate victory of good over evil. That is why

David is relieved of his miseries and is happily settled in life.

Q. 9. Give a brief account of David Copperfield's experiences at the Salem House.

Or

What opinion have you formed of the conditions prevailing in the schools of the time in England in the light of David's experience at Salem House ?

BACKGROUND

After his mother's marriage with Mr. Murdstone, David began to be ignored in his own household. He was ill-treated by Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone. As a result of this treatment David became sullen, dull and dogged. One day when Mr. Murdstone was beating David with a cane, David bit him. Cousequently David was severely beaten, imprisoned in a room for five days at the end of which he was sent to Salem House.

PLACARD ON HIS BACK

On his arrival in London, David was received by Mr. Mell, a teacher in the Salem House. Before going to the academy, Mr. Mell took David to a humble-looking house which was actually an alms-house. Mr. Mell's mother lived there. Thereafter, Mr. Mell took David to the academy situated at some distance. It being holiday time, all the boys had gone home and there was perfect silence in the school. Just after David's arrival in the school, a placard was tied on his back. It bore the words "Bearing of him, he bites". David experienced indescribable misery because of this placard. Whether it was possible for people to see him or not, he always imagined that somebody was reading it. A school employee with a wooden leg who a regular attendant upon the headmaster aggravated David's sufering's by repeatedly shouting to him to show the placard in a conspicuous manner, and not to try to hide it in any way. There was an old door in the playground on which the boys had a custom of carrying their names. As David read the names of the boys, he began to dread how the boys would react to his placard.

INTERVIEW WITH THE HEADMASTER

One day David was taken to meet M. Creakle, the headmaster of the school. Mr. Creakle had no voice, but spoke in a whisper. He pinched David's ear so hard that David felt as if his ear were blazing. He introduced himself as a Tartar and declared that he was 'a determined character'. Mr. Creakle was a very storn man who dealt mercilessly with all the offenders.

THE BOYS' RETURN

As the day of the reopening of the school approached, the boys started returning from their homes. The first boy to return was Tommy Traddles. He felt quite amused to see the placard on David's back. As other boys returned and saw the placard, they began to ridicule David on account of it.

However, none of the boys troubled David too much. David was not considered as being formally received into the school until James Steerforth arrived. Steerforth was very goodlooking and was reputed to be a good scholar. David was taken before him as before a magistrate. Steerforth treated David with certain degree of kindness. He took David's money into his own possession and persuaded David to spend it on a feast for the boys in his own room. At the feast, David learnt many things about the school and Mr. Creakle. Mr. Creakle, David learnt, had formerly been a small hop-dealer and had taken to the schooling business after being bankrupt in hops. He was the sternest and most severe of masters". Mr. Creakle had gone to the extent of turning out his son from the house because of his disobedience.

MR. CREAKLE'S REIGN OF TERROR

Before the classes began in earnest, Mr. Creakle addressed the boys and warned them against any laxity in learning their lessons. He then went to David's seat and told him that if he (David) was famous for biting people, he (Mr. Creakle) was famous for punishing boys. He then showed David the cane which he used to punish the offending boys. He gave David several 'fleshy cuts' with it that made him writhe, and soon he was in tears. A large majority of the boys got the same treatment as Mr. Creakle made the round of the school room. David tells us, "Half the establishment was writhing and crying, before the day's work began; and how much of it had writhed and cried before the day's work was over I am really afraid to recollect, lest I should seem to exaggerate". David lived in constant fear of Mr. Creakle. Traddles was the merriest boy in the school, and yet he was the most miserable because he was always being cared by Mr. Creakle. In course of time, David became quite friendly with Traddles and Steerforth.

MR. MELL'S DISMISSAL

Steerforth enjoyed a privileged position in the school because of his aristocratic background. On Sundays, the boys went to church. Steerforth walked in the company of Miss Creakle, Mr. Creakle's dauthter. Miss Creakle struck David as a young lady of extraordinary attractions. One day Steerforth quarreled with Mr. Mell in the classroom and spoke to him very rudely. Mr. Mell accused Steerforth was behaving in a mean manner. Hearing the noise, Mr. Creakle also came on the scene. On being asked, Steerforth said that Mr. Mell was an insolent 'beggar' as his mother lived in an alms-house. Instead of rebuking Steerforth for his impudence, Mr. Creakle dismissed Mr. Mell then and there. David felt miserable at Mr. Mell's departure and Mr. Creakle caned Traddles for being discovered in tears. Traddles even blamed Steerforth of ill-using Mr. Mell. Steerforth promised that he would write to his mother to send some money to Mr. Mell. That night when David was going on with a story in the dark, Mr. Mell's old flute seemed more than once to sound mournfully in his ears. As he lay down in his bed, he fancied it playing so mournfully somewhere that

he was quite wretched.

VISIT BY MR. PEGGOTTY AND HAM

One day Mr. Peggotty and Ham visited David at his school and brought him a gift of fish of different kinds. David introduced Mr. Peggotty and Ham to his friend Steerforth. David went back to Blunderstone during holidays and had a wonderful afternoon with his mother and Peggotty but neither Mr. Murdstone nor Miss Murdstone was happy to see him. Miss Murdstone was very glad when the holidays came to an end and David returned to Salem House. In the course of his second half-year at school, David one day received the news that his mother had expired. Finding himself an orphan in the whole wide world, David was plunged into grief. He immediately started for home to attend his mother's funeral. After the death of his mother, David was not sent to school and his education at Salem House came to an end.

CRITICISM OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

The description of Salem House reveals the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing in English of the time. Through David's experience at Salem House Dickens criticises the educational system of his time. David tell us :

> In a school carried on by sheer cruelty, whether it is presided over by a dunce or not, there is not likely to be much learnt. I believe our boys were, generally, as ignorant a set as any schoolboys in existence; they were too much troubled and knocked about to learn; they could no more do that to advantage, than any one can do anything to advantage in a life of constant misfortune, torment, and worry.

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Q. 10. Describe David's life at Murdstone and Grinby's Warehouse.

THE DEATH OF DAVID'S MOTHER

David received the news at Salem House, that his mother had died. He went home in mourning. This was the saddest thing that could happen to him. He loved his mother tenderly and he never suspected that she would die so soon.

DAVID NEGLECTED

David was now left quite alone. Peggotty had also been turned out of the house. He fell into a state of neglect. He received no love ar attention from cruel Mr. and Miss Murdstone. They disliked him and sullenly, sternly, steadily over-looked him. Murdstone thought of David as an unnecessary burden and wanted to get rid of him. He sent David with Mr. Quinion, his friend and manager of Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse. David was to begin his life in the world on his own account.

MURDSTONE AND GRINBY'S

Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the end of a narrow dirty lane. It was literally overrun with rats. They dealt in wine and sold it to

certain packet ships. David alongwith some other boys was employed to receive and wash empty bottles. The bottles were to be carefully examined at the time of receiving and if flawed, were to be rejected. He had to paste labels on full bottles and put seals or corks on them. These were to be labelled and packed also.

DAVID'S WORK

The work was very hard. The worst part of it was that he had to work with boys who were not the right type of society for a boy like David. There were Mick Walker and Mealy Potato to be his companions. When he thought of his companions at school and compared them with his present companions his heart was filled with pain and grief.

DAVID'S LODGING

He was to put up with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber in a small and unfurnished room in a dirty lane. The financial difficulties and crisis of the Micawber family always made David's heart heavy. Micawber was taken to the prison for debts and David had to leave that house and seek another lodging.

HIS HARD LIFE

David's life was extremely miserable. He got very low wages which he could hardly stretch over a week. he had very little to eat and no joy or pride in this base work. There was none to look after him and to guide him. There was every chance of his growing into a vagabond and a rogue. He writes pathetically, "From Monday morning till Saturday night I had no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support of any kind .... I know that, but for the grace of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond".

HIS DECISION TO SEEK HIS AUNT

David felt extremely wretched and had almost lost every hope of getting rid of this wretched life. He thought of his aunt Betsey Trotwood one day and found out her address from Peggotty and left for Dover on Sunday. It was a desperate attempt at escape from the drudgery to which he had been doomed by Murdstone at Murdstone and Grinby's Warehouse.

Q. 11. Describe the School run by Dr. Strong.

Or

Compare and contrast Salem House with Dr. Strong's school.

DR. STRONG'S SCHOOL

David's aunt took very kindly to him. She adopted him as her child and sent him to Dr. Strong's school for education. It was a grave building in a courtyard. It had a learned air about it. The school room was a pretty large hall. It was on the quietest side of the house. There were then about twenty five students reading with Dr. Strong. Dr. Strong was kind and

scholarly. He believed his students and appealed to their sense of duty and honour. The school was well ordered and the students were well-behaved. They also made good progress at their studies. Some of the higher scholars boarded at Dr. Strong's house. Dr. Strong at that time was engaged in compiling a monumental Greek Dictionary which was not likely to be completed in his life time.

DAVID'S PROGRESS

Dr. Strong's school was one of the best schools of that time. The scholars were happy. They acquired good habits, self respect and self confidence there. David soon outgrew the sordid influence of Murdstone and Grinby's Warehouse. He was happy and made rapid progress in games and studies and everybody spoke well of him to aunt Betsey whenever she visited that school. Here David was once again restored to his happy and innocent childhood. Being sent to this school was one of the luckiest things that could happen to David.

DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERES AT THE TWO SCHOOLS

David went first to the Salem House School and afterwards to Dr. Strong's school. The two schools had just the opposite atmosphere, traditions and methods. Salem house was governed by brutal force. Tyranny and torture were its accepted methods. Boys were regarded as wicked and were distrusted in everything. They were made to believe that they had no noble instincts. A close watch was kept and the cane and the whip were used at the slightest provocation, and quite often without any provocation.

RULE OF FORCE

The result of this barbaric rule was that the boys acquired the undesirable habit of obeying force only. There was suppression but no discipline. The incident connected with Mr. Mell could only happen in a school like Salem House. Just as Mr. Creakle was obeyed because he was a Tartar, in the same way Steerforth was dreaded and fondled by Creakle because he was a powerful bully. He was the favourite of the headmaster and he could not only tyrannise over the students but could also insult a good and gentle teacher like Mr. Mell. The atmosphere of the place was altogether not favourable to the growth of anv healthy spirit among the students.

IDEAL SCHOOL

Dr. Strong's on the other hand, was the right type of school. It was governed by love and faith. The teacher loved his pupils and the pupils loved and respected their teachers. The boys felt happy and they gave their best cooperation in everything. They were trusted and believed to be good and they tried to earn and deserve this trust. They did well at games and studies and were jealous of the prestige and honour of the institution. The school was well organised and properly managed. It was run on very sound lines. Every student felt that he had a hand in the management of the school

and tried to sustain the character and dignity of the school.

CONCLUSION

The effect on the character and education of the student was equally different. Mr. Creakle's pupils were undisciplined. They were too disturbed to make any progress with their studies. The pupils of Dr. Strong were likely to grow up into fine gentlemen, self-respecting and dignified. They made wonderful progress at both games and studies. Doctor Strong's school was as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil.

Q. 12. Narrate in your own words the story of Uriah Heep's villainy and his exposure at the hands of Mr. Micawber.

Or

"Uriah Heep is a black-hearted villain who causes intense suffering to all concerned in *David Copperfield*". Discuss.

INTRODUCTION

Disgusted with his life at Murdstone and Grinby's David ran away to his great aunt Betsey Trotwood in Dover. After hearing his story, Aunt Betsey decided to adopt him and send him to a good school in Canterbury. She, therefore, took him to the house of her friend and adviser, Mr. Wickfield. Reaching the house, the first person they saw was Uriah Heep, who worked as Mr. Wickfield's clerk.

HEEP'S ATTEMPT TO LEARN LAW

David noticed that Uriah Heep used to work late in Mr. Wickfield's office. He was a clerk there. He told David that he was studying law to take a degree in law. He also invited David to have tea with him and his mother at their humble residence. Heep always called himself and his mother humble people. Uriah Heep's interest in David was motivated. He wanted to extract from him information about Mr. Wickfield's business, especially about the shares of Miss Betsey.

HEEP'S DESIGN

Uriah Heep was a black-hearted villain. He studied law only to learn forgery and to know how to cheat Wickfield safely. He also cultivated friendship with Mr. Micawber and gave him a job of a clerk under him only to have Mr. Micawber as a witness on forged documents. He paid very little for his services, exploited him and Mr. Wickfield by offering them wine. He knew that wine was a weakness of Mr. Wickfield and he went on black-mailing him. He had designs on Agnes, Mr. Wickfield's daughter and wanted to marry her but failed because of the tact and wisdom of Agnes.

MR. MICAWBER'S EXPOSURE OF HEEP

It is Mr. Micawber who exposed Uriah Heep. In the King's Bench Prison, Mr. Micawber told David that Heep was a scoundrel, and had committed villainy, baseness, fraud, deception, conspiracy. After some time, David, Mr. Traddles and Mr. Micawber decided to teach Uriah Heep

a lesson for his villainy. Then it was Mr. Micawber again who declared that Heep had tried to use him as an agent of fraud. He disclosed that Uriah Heep had forged the signatures of Mr. Wickfield and had given him an amount of £ 12,614—2—9, to meet business charges which had never in fact existed. Mr. Micawber now had a number of such forged documents in his possession. There was one, unattested, which could prove Heep's guilt.

It was Mr. Micawber who proved that Heep bad done all this in order to bring Mr. and Miss Agnes Wickfield completely under his control. To achieve this goal, he had compelled Mr. Wickfield to sign a relinquishment deed, giving up his share in the partnership in return for an annuity to be paid quarterly. According to this deed, he had also empowered Heep to sell all his household-furniture.

CONCLUSION

The villainy of Uriah Heep is clear from his act of forgery. In a bank-forgery, he gets his due punishment. Thus, it is quite clear that Uriah Heep is not only a drunkard but also a subtle and cunning villain, his humbleness is only a mask. He practises humbleness only to cheat others. He is very black at heart. His intentions are very wild : he wants to grab not only the money of his master but also his daughter. Although he succeeds in getting his master's money by fraud, yet he fails to win his daughter. He is a merciless creature and may be called the lago of Dickens.

Q. 13. Describe David's love and circumstances leading to his marriage with Dora.

DAVID'S LOVE FOR DORA

David tell in love with Dora, the daughter of Mr. Spenlow, the lawyer to whom he was articled. He had met her on a week-end visit to Mr. Spenlow's house. He had fallen in love with her at the first sight. He felt happy when he thought of her. He made up his mind to meet her and declare his love for her. He wanted to know his fate. Dora was on a short visit to a friend of hers named Miss. Mill. He arrived at her house. He found Dora sitting alone in a room upstairs. He made his proposal to her and said that he loved her very much and that he would die without her. Dora gave her approval. Soon they were engaged. The time after the engagement was indeed very sweet. They had their meetings, their quarrels and conciliations.

BETSEY'S LOSS OF FORTUNE

Next day David wrote to Agnes. He told her about his engagement to Dora and his happiness. By return post he got a reply to his letter. On his return to his chambers, he was surprised to find his aunt and Mr. Dick waiting for him there. Her unexpected visit gave him lot of pleasure. His aunt sat on luggage which she had brought with her. David could at once see that his aunt was inwardly very much agitated. He began to wonder if he had offended her in any way. But she removed all his doubts and told

him about the purpose of her visit. His aunt explained to him that she was utterly ruined. The luggage on which she sat was the only thing she possessed. She had tole Janet to let the cottage. David told his aunt that he was in love with Dora. His aunt did not oppose him, but she appeared to be interested more in Agnes than in Dora. David, however, worshipped Dora. He wanted to make her his life partner. His aunt thought that David was not acting wisely in choosing Dora in preference to Agnes.

MR. SPENLOW'S DEATH

David doubted if he would get Mr. Spenlow's permission to marry his daughter. But before David could get Mr. Spenlow's permission the latter died. Dora felt very miserable. She cried for her dead father. She had two aunts with whom she went to live. DAvid felt very sorry for her. There was one thing, however, which gave him satisfaction. Now Dora was poor like him. She could be his wife without the world saying that he had married her for money.

DAVID MARRIAGE

David now sought Agnes's advice on the subject of his courtship. Agnes advised him to write to the aunts of Dora for permission to carry on the courtship. He did as Agnes had advised him. This went on for a year. At the end of this period David married Dora. Traddles who was now a lawyer, acted as his best man.

Q. 14. Describe the circumstances leading to David's marriage with Agnes.

DAVID'S LONELINESS AFTER DORA'S DEATH

Dora was dead. Her death left David depressed and dejected. On Agnes's advice he went on a foreign tour. He wandered for sometime in Switzerland. In the beginning he had no interest either in the beautiful scenes and sights of Nature or the human beings in whose midst he lived. Gradually under the tender influence of Agnes, David's interest in things revived. He wrote a book while abroad which was kinkly received at home and he became a famous author. He made up his mind and returned to his country earlier than he was expected there.

DAVID'S VISIT TO AGNES

He spent sometime with his aunt Betsey and his kind nurse Peggotty. He then visited Traddles and was delighted to find him happily married to the girl of his heart. He then went to meet Agnes.

He sat with Agnes in the window of her room and thanked her for the great solace and support she had been to him throughout his life, specially the hour of his recent affliction. He felt that he could not live without her any longer. He would like to have her as his wife if whe agreed. She agreed. He clasped her in his arms. Agnes tenderly yielded. All his reserve now was over the his love came gushing out. He told her with love and gratitude that

all that he was, she had made him. She had been ever pointing to him upwards and inspiring him to do nobler things. He would be ever led by her till he died. He had loved her all along.

THEIR MARRIAGE

She tenderly told him in her turn that she had also loved him all her life. They were married within a fortnight. David was happy to learn later that his dear Dora had requested Agnes at her death-bed to marry David. They ever lived in bliss afterwards.

Q. 15. Narrate the story of the Micawbers in your own words.

INTRODUCTION

The Micawbers play a very important part in David's life. When David was sent to London to work at Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse arrangements were made with Mr. Micawber for his stay as a lodger. Mr. Micawber was a commission agent but he earned practically nothing from his occupation.

DAVID'S FIRST MEETING WITH MR. MICAWBER

It was half-past twelve when Mr. Quinion asked David to come into the counting house. David met there a stoutish middle aged, bald headed man with a broad face. His clothes were shabby but he, it appeared, wanted to look genteel with a fine shirt-collar, a stick and a quizzing glass. He informed David that, according to instructions received from Mr. Murdstone he would accept David as a lodger. Mr. Quinion told David that the visitor's name was Micawber and that he occasionally took orders from the firm on commission. Mr. Micawber gave his address as Windsor Terrace. City Road. But thinking that David did not know his way about London, he promised to call at 8 P.M. to accompany him to Windsor Terrace.

THE MICAWBER HOUSEHOLD

Mr. Micawber called punctually at 8 P. M. The house was shabby and Mrs. Micawber turned out to be a thin lady, not at all young. She always had a baby at her breast—one of the twins. There were also a boy of four and a girl of three. David's room was at the top of the house, with very little furniture in it.

MR. MICAWBER'S FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

As Mrs. Micawber showed David to his room, she explained how financial difficulties made it necessary for them to take a lodger. Mr. Micawber, it seemed, was then in a great trouble—a thing Mrs. Micawber could not have understood before her marriage. David somehow got the impression that Mr. Micawber was now an agent in London for some business firms but made very little out of it. Mrs. Micawber hinted that just then, the creditors were most troublesome but Mr. Micawber could not possibly pay them.

THE MICAWBERS' FLEXIBLE NATURE

Mrs. Micawber, tried her best to help but the creditors visited them at all hours and were very troublesome. One of them, a boot-maker, would come very early in the morning and would shout in the most insulting fashion. Mr. Micawber would be much uset for a while, but the next moment he would go out humming a tune. Mrs. Micawber was also of this type. Very much upset by something, within an hour she would pawn the spoons and eat a good meal. One evening David found her in a swoon, but that very night she was enjoying her meal and telling stories of her parents.

DAVID'S INTIMACY WITH THE MICAWBERS

David got quite intimate with the Micawbers, sharing in their cares and worries. On Saturday nights and Sunday mornings Mr. and Mrs. Micawber would tell him about their troubles. But they would soon get over their depression and Mr. Micawber would form plans "in case anything turned up". David became a friend to them although he was so much younger. But he made it a point not to eat and drink with them as he knew that they were very badly off.

One day Mrs. Micawber took David completely into her confidence and told him that there was nothing in the house to eat. David offered the little money he had as a loan but she would not take it. She then asked David to do her a service which was to dispose of certain articles at the pawn-broker's shop in order to raise some money. This had often to be done in the past. But neither she nor Mr. Micawber could do it and the servant could not be trusted. David willingly agreed. Thenceforward he would often visit these shops almost every day with some article of property.

MR. MICAWBER'S ARREST

At last Mr. Micawber was arrested for debts and taken to the King's Bench prison. He was very depressed at first but was soon his usual cheerful self. On the first Sunday after this David visited him in prison to have dinner with him. At last Mr. Micawber got a room for himself in the prison where the family joined him. As David wanted to be near them a room was found for him near the prison.

MR. MICAWBER'S RELEASE

In due time, Mr. Micawber was released from prison. He took lodgings for a week in the same house in which David lived. In the evening Mrs. Micawber explained to David their future plans. Her family had offered to use their influence and obtain employment for Mr. Micawber in the Custom House. Her family was at Plymouth. They would soon go to that town. On David's asking her whether she would accompany her husband, Mrs. Micawber was very much moved. She expressed her firm resolve never to desert her husband.

THE MICAWBERS' DEPARTURE FOR PLYMOUTH

The day on which the Micawbers were due to leave they break-fasted

with David. They were feeling unhappy at the thought of their separation. Here Mr. Micawber advised David to learn to live within his means. Before the Micawbers left Mrs. Micawber kissed David for the first time with motherly affection.

MR. MICAWBER'S MEETING WITH HEEP

Mr. Micawber entered the story sgain at the time when David was taking tea with Uriah Heep and his mother. The door of Uriah Heep's house was open. Mr. Micawber came down the street and while passing by it saw Copperfield seated inside. He was surprised to see Copperfield there. He entered the room and began to talk in a friendly way with Uriah Heep. David felt very uncomfortable. He did not like that anything of his past should be known to Uriah. On the pretext that he was anxious to see Mrs. Micawber, David led Micawber out of the house. On meeting Mrs. Micaeber he learnt that Mr. Micawber could not succeed in getting a job in the Custom House. Mrs. Micawber's family did not help him as was expected. Mr. Micawber had been advised to enter the coal trade. But the coal trade needed capital. Mr. Micawber had plenty of talent but he had no capital. So the plan of joining the coal-trade must fall through. Although David did not like that Mr. Micawber should be friendly with Uriah Heep he was surprised to find the same evening Mr. Micawber and Uriah Heep walking arm in arm. Next day however, the Micawbers returned to London.

THE MICAWBERS LIVING IN SAME HOUSE WITH TRADDLES

Mr. Micawber plays a very important role in the later part of the novel. The next time we meet him living in the same house with Traddles. Traddles whom David had gone to see told him that he boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber who lived downstairs. David was very much pleased to meet them. Mr. Micawber learnt that Traddles was their lodger. Mr. Micawber was employed upon the sale of corn on commission. But the business did not pay.

MR. MICAWBER'S EXPOSURE OF HEEP

Next time we find Mr. Micawber working as the confidential clerk to Wickfield and Heep. Here, clever as he was he found out a fraud which Uriah Heep had committed in managing the affairs of Mr. Wickfield. Uriah Heep had for many years taken advantage of the weakness of Mr. Wickfield. When Mr. Wickfield bad been the least fit, Uriah Heep had intentionally misled him. He had made him believe that the firm of Wickfkeld and Heep was bankrupt. To pay the debts of the firm he had persuaded Mr. Wickfield to draw out the sum of twelve thousand pounds entrusted to him by Betsey Trotwood for investment. In fact, the firm never had been bankrupt. There never had been any debts. This sum had gone into the pocket of Uriah Heep. With great cunning, Heep had made it appear that the money had been stolen as a result of Wickfield's dishonest intentions. He used this lie to torture him and to keep him poor.

THE MICAWBERS' EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

Betsey Trotwood thanked Mr. Micawber for rendering her that great service. As a reward for it she offered to pay the expenses for his emigration to Australia if he so desired. Mr. Micawber took advantage of this generous offer and went to Australia where his talents helped him in becoming a magistrate.

Q. 16. It is said that Dickens' plots are weak. How, far does *David Copperfield* support this criticism ?

Or

Show that *David Copperfield* is a novel "with a plot and not a mere string of adventures and experiences".

Or

Bring out the improbabilities and inconsistencies in the plot o. *David Copperfield*.

Ans. *See Chapter 14.*

Q. 17. "Figures and scenes swam into his mind in a coloured confusion. He just hang them together on any one thread of clumsy conventional plot he could think of". Examine.

Or

"Dickens' novels are like shapeless bags into which all manners of different objects of varying shapes and sizes have been ruthlessly cramused''. Examine.

Or

"Dickens may not construct a story well, but he tells it admirably". Justify.

Ans. *See Chapter 2.*

Q. 18. "The pen that wrote *David Copperfield* was often dipped in its own blood". (Hugh Walker). Discuss.

Or

"*David Copperfield* is in great part autobiographical". Discuss.

Ans. *See Chapter 13.*

Q. 19. "Daughter and tears he closely together in his writings and frequently invade one another's territory". Comment with reference to *David Copperfield*.

Ans. *See Chapter 16.*

Q. 20. "*David Copperfield's* characters are living human beings with all the storng points and weaknesses". Discuss.

Ans. *See Chapter 15.*

Q. 21. "Dickensian Characters are all flat and yet there is a feeling of human depth in them". Discuss.

Or

Show that Dickens' characters are types as well as individuals.

Or

"The characters of Dickens are caricatures of comedy or monstrous puppets of melodrama". Do you agree ?

Or

Do you consider Dickens a caricaturist ? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. *See Chapter 3.*

Q. 22. "Dickens is capital at a baby". Discuss.

Ans. *See Chapter 17.*

◆

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